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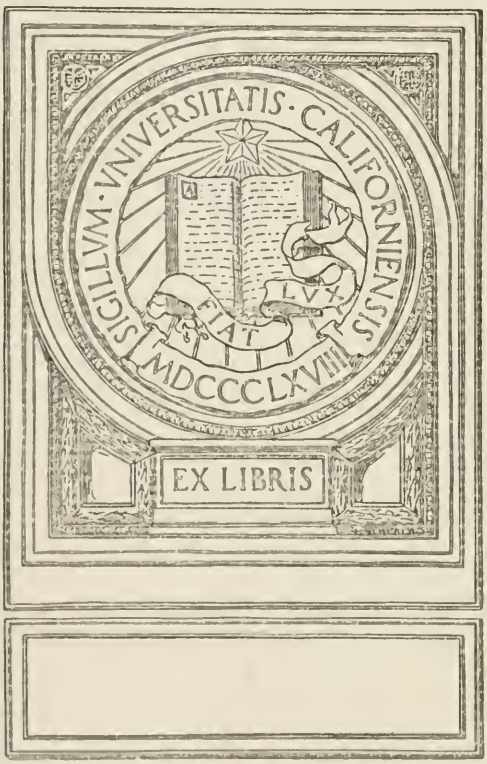

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ROLAND CASHEL.

BY

CHARLES LEVER,

AUTHOR OF "HARRY LORREQUER," "THE KNIGHT OF GWYNNE,"
&c. &c.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY PHIZ.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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ILLUSTRATIONS TO VOL. II.

PAGE

"After Luncheon—The Start"—*Frontispiece.*

Corrigan parts with an Old Friend 16

A Phœnix 48

Aunt Fanny's Benediction 60

A little Bit of Scandal 63

The Wager 83

Preparations for Departure 101

"No" is the Feminine of "Yes" 114

The Chess-Players 128

The Temptation 148

Picturesque, but not Pleasant 164

A Family Party 172

The Masquerade 182

The Suspicion 195

Friends. ("Ever faithfully yours") 214

Guilt and Innocence 220

La Ninetta 254

Linton's last Visit to Maritana 275

The Arrest 282

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TO

G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

My dear James,

You, once upon a time, dedicated to me a tale of deep and thrilling interest. Let me now inscribe to you this volume on the plea of that classic authority who, in the interchange of armour, "gave Brass for Gold."

It is, however, far less to repay the obligation of a debt by giving you a "Roland"—not for your "Oliver," but your "Stepmother"—than for the pleasure of recording one "Fact" in a bulky tome of Fiction, that I now write your name at the head of this page—that fact being, the warm memory I cherish of all our pleasant hours of intercourse, and the sincere value I place upon the honour of your friendship.

Yours, in all esteem and affection,

Charles Lever.

Palazzo Ximenes, Florence,
October 20, 1849.

ROLAND CASHEL.

CHAPTER I.

I'll make her brew the beverage herself,
With her own fingers stir the cup,
And know 'tis poison as she drinks it.

HAROLD.

HAD Linton been about to renew an acquaintance with one he had scarcely known before, and who might possibly have ceased to remember him, his manner could not have been more studiously diffident and respectful.

"I rejoice to see your Ladyship here," said he, in a low, deliberate voice; "where, on the last time we spoke together, you seemed uncertain of coming."

"Very true, Mr. Linton," said she, not looking up from her work; "my Lord had not fully made up his mind."

"Say, rather, your Ladyship had changed yours," said he, with a cold smile; "a privilege you are not wont to deny yourself."

"I might have exercised it oftener in life with advantage," replied she, still holding her head bent over the embroidery frame.

"Don't you think that your Ladyship and I are old friends enough to speak without innuendo?"

"If we speak at all," said she, with a low but calm accent.

"True, that is to be thought of," rejoined he, with an unmoved quietude of voice. "Being in a manner prepared for a change in your Ladyship's sentiments towards me——"

"Sir!" said she, interrupting, and as suddenly raising her face, which was now covered with a deep blush.

"I trust I have said nothing to provoke reproof," said Linton, coldly. "Your Ladyship is well aware if my words be not true. I repeat it, then—your sentiments *are* changed towards me, or—the alteration is not of *my* choosing—I was deceived in the expression of them when last we met."

"It may suit your purpose, Sir, but it can scarcely conform to the

generosity of a gentleman, to taunt me with acceding to your request for a meeting. If any other weakness can be alleged against me, pray let me hear it."

"When we last met," said Linton, in a voice of lower and deeper meaning than before, "we did so that *I* might speak, and *you* hear, the avowal of a passion which for years has filled my heart—against which I have struggled and fought in vain—to stifle which I have plunged into dissipation that I detested, and followed ambitions I despised—to obliterate all memory of which I would stoop to crime itself, rather than suffer on in the hopeless misery I must do."

"I will hear no more of this," said she, pushing back the work-table, and preparing to rise.

"You must, and you shall hear me, Madam," said he, replacing the table and affecting to arrange it for her. "I conclude you do not wish this amiable company to arbitrate between us."

"Oh, Sir! is it thus you threaten me?"

"You should say compromise, Madam. There can be no threat where a common ruin impends on all concerned."

"To what end all this, Mr. Linton?" said she. "You surely cannot expect from me any return to a feeling which, if it once existed, you yourself were the means of uprooting for ever. Even *you* could scarcely be ungenerous enough to persecute one for whose misery you have done already too much."

"Will you accept my arm for half an hour?" cried he, interrupting. "I pledge myself it shall be the last time I either make such a request, or even allude to this topic between us. On the pretence of showing you the house, I may be able—if not to justify myself—nay, I see how little you care for that—well, at least to assure you that I have no other wish, no other hope, than to see you happy."

"I cannot trust you," said she, in a tone of agitation; "already we are remarked."

"So I perceive," said he, in an under tone; then added, in a voice audible enough to be heard by the rest, "I am too vain of my architectural merits to leave their discovery to chance, and as you are good enough to say you would like to see the house, pray will your Ladyship accept my arm, while I perform the cicerone on myself?"

The "coup" succeeded; and, to avoid the difficulty and embarrassment a refusal would have created, Lady Kilgoff arose, and prepared to accompany him.

"Eh, what—what is't, my Lady?" said Lord Kilgoff, suddenly awaking from a kind of lethargic slumber, as she whispered some words in his ear.

"Her Ladyship is telling you not to be jealous, my Lord, while she is making the tour of the house with Mr. Linton," said Lady Janet, with a malicious sparkle of her green eyes.

"Why not make it a royal progress?" said Sir Harvey; "her Majesty the Queen might like it well."

"Her Majesty likes everything that promises amusement," said the wild romp; "come, Charley, give us your arm."

"No, I've got a letter or two to write," said he, rudely; "there's Upton or Jennings quite ready for any foolery."

"This is too bad!" cried she; and through all the pantomime of mock royalty, a real tear rose to her eyes, and rolled heavily down her cheek; then, with a sudden change of humour, she said, "Mr. Cashel, will *you* take me?"

The request was too late, for already he had given his arm to Lady Janet; an act of devotion he was performing with the expression of a saint under martyrdom.

"Sir Harvey—there's no help for it—we are reduced to *you*."

But Sir Harvey was leaving the room with Olivia Kennyfeck. In fact, couples paired off in every direction; the only disengaged cavalier being Sir Andrew MacFarline, who, with a sardonic grin on his features, came hobbling forward, as he said,

"Ye maunna tak' sich long strides, Missy, if ye ga wi' *me*, for I've got a couple o' ounces of Langredge shot in my left knee—forbye the gout in both ankles."

"I say, Jim," called out Lord Charles, as she moved away, "if you like to ride Princepino this afternoon, he's ready for you."

"Are *you* going?" said she, turning her head.

"Yes."

"Then *I'll* not go." And so saying, she left the room.

When Linton, accompanied by Lady Kilgoff, issued from the drawing-room, instead of proceeding through the billiard-room towards the suite which formed the "show" part of the mansion, he turned abruptly to his left, and passing through a narrow corridor, came out upon a terrace, at the end of which stood a large conservatory, opening into the garden.

"I ask pardon," said he, "if I reverse the order of our geography, and show you the frontiers of the realm before we visit the capital, but otherwise we shall only be the advance-guard of that interesting company, who have nothing more at heart than to overhear us."

Lady Kilgoff walked along without speaking, at his side, having relinquished the support of his arm with a stiff, frigid courtesy. Had any one been there to mark the two figures, as side by side they went, each deep in thought, and not even venturing a glance at the other, he might well have wondered what strange link could connect them. It was thus they entered the conservatory, where two rows of orange-trees formed a lane of foliage almost impenetrable to the eye.

"As this may be the last time we shall ever speak together in secret——"

"You have promised as much, Sir," said she, interrupting; and the very rapidity of her utterance betrayed the eagerness of her wish.

"Be it so, Madam," replied he, coldly, and with a tone of sternness very different from that he had used at first. "I have ever preferred your wishes to my own. I shall never prove false to that allegiance. As we are now about to speak on terms which never can be resumed, let us at least be frank. Let us use candour with each other. Even unpleasing truth is better at such a moment than smooth-tongued insincerity."

"This preamble does not promise well," said Lady Kilgoff, with a cold smile.

"Not, perhaps, for the agreeability of our interview, but it may save us both much time and much temper. I have said that you are changed towards me."

"Oh, Sir! if I had suspected that this was to be the theme——" She stopped, and seemed uncertain, when he finished the speech for her.

"You would never have accorded me this meeting. Do be frank, Madam, and spare me the pain of self-inflicted severity. Well, I will not impose upon your kindness, nor indeed was such my intention, if you had but heard me out. Yes, Madam, I should have told you that while I deplore that alteration, I no more make you chargeable with it, than *you* can call *me* to account for cherishing a passion without a hope. Both one and the other are independent of us. That one should forget and the other remember is beyond mere volition."

He waited for some token of assent—some slight evidence of concurrence—but none came, and he resumed:

"When first I had the happiness of being distinguished by some slight show of your preference, there were many others who sought with eagerness for that position I was supposed to occupy in your favour. It was the first access of vanity in my heart, and it cost me dearly. Some, envied me—some, scoffed—some, predicted that my triumph would be a brief one—some, were rude enough to say that I was only placed like a buoy, to show the passage, and that I should lie fast at anchor while others sailed on with prosperous gale and favouring fortune. You, Madam, best know which of these were right. I see that I weary you. I can conceive how distasteful all these memories must be, nor should I evoke them without absolute necessity. To be brief, then, you are now about to play over with another the very game by which you once deceived me. It is your caprice to sacrifice another to your vanity; but know, Madam, the liberties which the world smiled at in Miss Gardiner will be keenly criticised in the Lady Kilgoff. In the former case, the most malevolent could but hint at a mésalliance; in the latter, evil tongues can

take a wider latitude. To be sure, the fascinating qualities of the suitor, his wealth, his enviable position, will plead with some; my Lord's age and decrepitude will weigh with others; but even these charitable persons will not spare *you*. Your own sex are seldom overmerciful in their judgments. Men are unscrupulous enough to hint that there was no secret in the matter; some will go further, and affect to say that they themselves were not unfavourably looked on."

"Will you give me a chair, Sir," said she, in a voice which, though barely above a whisper, vibrated with intense passion. Linton hastened to fetch a seat, his whole features glowing with the elation of his vengeance. This passed rapidly away, and as he placed the chair for her to sit down, his face had resumed its former cold, almost melancholy expression.

"I hope you are not ill?" said he, with an air of feeling.

A glance of the most ineffable scorn was her only reply.

"It is with sincere sorrow that I inflict this pain upon you; indeed, when I heard of that unhappy yacht excursion, my mind was made up to see Lord Kilgoff the very moment of his arrival, and, on any pretence, to induce him to leave this. This hope, however, was taken from me, when I beheld the sad state into which he had fallen, leaving me no other alternative than to address yourself. I will not hurt your ears by repeating the inventions, each full of falsehood, that heralded your arrival here. The insulting discussions how you should be met—whether your conduct had already precluded your acceptance amongst the circle of your equals—or, that you were only a subject of avoidance to mothers of marriageable daughters, and maiden ladies of excessive virtue. You have mixed in the world, and therefore can well imagine every ingenious turn of this peculiar eloquence. How was I—I who have known—I who—nay, Madam, not a word shall pass my lips in reference to that theme—I would only ask, could I hear these things, could I see your foot nearing the cliff and not cry out, Stop?—Another step and you are lost! There are women who can play this dangerous game with cool heads and cooler hearts; schooled in all the frigid indifference that would seem the birthright of a certain class, the secrets of their affections die with them—but you are not one of these. Born in what they would call an humbler, but I should call a far higher, sphere, where the feelings are fresher and the emotions purer, *you* might chance to—fall in love!"

A faint smile, so faint that it conveyed no expression to her eyes, was Lady Kilgoff's acknowledgment of these last words.

"Have you finished, Sir?" said she, as, after a pause of some seconds, he stood still.

"Not yet, Madam," replied he, dryly.

"In that case, Sir, would it not be as well to tell the man who is lingering yonder to leave this? except, perhaps, it may be your desire to have a witness to your words."

Linton started, and grew deadly pale; for he now perceived that the man must have been in the conservatory during the entire interview. Hastening round to where he stood, his fears were at once dispelled; for it was the Italian sailor, Giovanni, who, in the multiplicity of his accomplishments, was now assisting the gardener among the plants.

"It is of no consequence, Madam," said he, returning; "the man is an Italian, who understands nothing of English."

"*You* are always fortunate, Mr. Linton," said she, with a deep emphasis on the pronoun.

"I have ceased to boast of my good luck, for many a day."

"Having, doubtless, so many other qualities to be proud of," said she, with a malicious sparkle of her dark eyes.

"The question is now, Madam, of one far more interesting than *me*."

"Can that be possible, Sir? Is any one's welfare of such moment to his friends—to the world at large—as the high-minded, the honourable, the open-hearted Mr. Linton, who condescends, for the sake of a warning to his young friends, to turn gambler, and ruin them; while he has the daring courage to single out a poor unprotected woman, without one who could rightfully defend her, and, under the miserable mask of interest, to insult her?"

"Is it thus you read my conduct, Madam?" said he, with an air at once sad and reproachful.

"Not altogether, Mr. Linton. Besides the ineffable pleasure of giving pain, I perceive that you are acquitting a debt—the debt of hate you owe me; because——but I cannot descend to occupy the same level with you in this business. My reply to you is a very short one. Your insult to me must go unpunished; for, as you well know, I have not one to resent it. You have, however, introduced another name in this discussion; to that gentleman I will reveal all that you have said this day. The consequences may be what they will, I care not; I never provoked them. You best know, Sir, how the reckoning will fare with you."

Linton grew pale, almost lividly so, while he bit his lip till the very blood came; then, suddenly recovering himself, he said: "I am not aware of having mentioned a name. I think your Ladyship must have been mistaken; but"—and here he laughed slightly—"you will scarce succeed in sowing discord between me and my old friend Lord Charles Frobisher."

"Lord Charles Frobisher!" echoed she, almost stunned with the effrontery.

"You seem surprised, Madam. I trust your Ladyship meant no other." The insolence of his manner, as he said this, left her unable for some minutes to reply, and when she did speak, it was with evident effort.

"I trust now, Sir, that we have spoken for the last time together. I own—and it is, indeed, humiliation enough to own it—your words have deeply insulted me. I cannot deny you the satisfaction of knowing this; and yet, with all these things before me, I do not hate —I only despise you."

So saying, she moved towards the door, but Linton stepped forward, and said: "One instant, Madam. You seem to forget that we are pledged to walk through the rooms; our amiable friends are doubtless looking for us."

"I will ask Mr. Cashel to be my chaperon another time," said she, carelessly; and drawing her shawl around her, passed out, leaving Linton alone in the conservatory.

"Ay, by St. Paul! the work goes bravely on," cried he, as soon as she had disappeared. "If she ruin not him and herself to boot, now, I am sore mistaken. The game is full of interest, and, if I had not so much in hand, would delight me."

With this brief soliloquy, he turned to where the Italian was standing, pruning an orange-tree.

"Have you learned any English yet, Giovanni?"

A slight but significant gesture of one finger gave the negative.

"No matter, your own soft vowels are in more request here. The dress I told you of is now come; my servant will give it to you; so, be ready with your guitar, if the ladies wish for it, this evening."

Giovanni bowed respectfully, and went on with his work, and soon after Linton strolled into the garden to muse over the late scene.

Had any one been there to mark the signs of triumphant elation on his features, they would have seen the man in all the sincerity of his bold, bad heart. His success was perfect. Knowing well the proud nature of the young, high-spirited woman, thoroughly acquainted with her impatient temper and haughty character, he rightly foresaw that to tell her she had become the subject of a calumny, was to rouse her pride to confront it openly. To whisper that the world would not admit of this or that, was to make her brave that world, or sink under the effort.

To sting her to such resistance was his wily game, and who knew better how to play it? The insinuated sneers at the class to which she had once belonged, as one not "patented" to assume the vices of their betters, was a deep and most telling hit; and he saw, when they separated, that her mind was made up, at any cost and every risk, to live down the slander by utter contempt of it. Linton asked for no more. "Let her," said he to himself, "but enter the lists with the

world for an adversary! I'll give her all the benefit of the best motives—as much purity of heart, and so forth, as she cares for—but, 'I'll name the winner,' after all."

Too true. The worthy people who fancy that an innate honesty of purpose can compensate for all the breaches of conventional use, are like the volunteers of an army who refuse to wear its uniform, and are as often picked down by their allies as by their enemies.

CHAPTER II.

Such a concourse ne'er was seen
Of coaches, noddies, cars, and jingles,
"Chars-à-bancs"—to hold sixteen,
And "Sulkies" meant to carry singles.
THE PIC-NIC: A LAY.

IT is an old remark that nothing is so stupid as love-letters; and, pretty much in the same spirit, we may affirm that there are few duller topics than festivities. The scenes in which the actor is most interested are, out of compensation, perhaps, those least worthy to record; the very inability of description to render them is disheartening too. One must eternally resort to the effects produced, as evidences of the cause, just as, when we would characterise a climate, we find ourselves obliged to fall back upon the vegetable productions, the fruits and flowers of the seasons, to convey even anything of what we desire. So is it Pleasure has its own atmosphere—we may breathe, but hardly chronicle it.

These prosings of ours have reference to the gaieties of Tubbermore, which certainly were all that a merry party and an unbounded expenditure could compass. The style of living was princely in its splendour: luxuries fetched from every land—the rarest wines of every country, the most exquisite flowers—all that taste can suggest, and gold can buy, were there; and while the order of each day was maintained with undiminished splendour, every little fancy of the guests was studied with a watchful politeness that marks the highest delicacy of hospitality.

If a bachelor's house be wanting in the gracefulness which is the charm of a family reception, there is a freedom, a degree of liberty in all the movements of the guests, which some would accept as a fair compromise; for, while the men assume a full equality with their host, the ladies are supreme in all such establishments. Roland Cashel was, indeed, not the man to dislike this kind of democracy; it spared

him trouble; it inflicted no tiresome routine of attentions; he was free as the others to follow the bent of his humour, and he asked for no more.

It was without one particle of vulgar pride of wealth that he delighted in the pleasure he saw around him; it was the mere buoyancy of a high-spirited nature. The cost no more entered into his calculations in a personal than a pecuniary sense. A consciousness that he was the source of all that splendid festivity—that his will was the motive-power of all that complex machinery of pleasure—increased, but did not constitute, his enjoyment. To see his guests happy, in the various modes they preferred, was his great delight, and, for once, he felt inclined to think that wealth had great privileges.

The display of all, which gratified him most, was that which usually took place each day after luncheon; when the great space before the house was thronged with equipages of various kinds and degrees, with saddle-horses and mounted grooms, and amid all the bustle of discussing where to, and with whom, the party issued forth to spend the hours before dinner.

A looker-on would have been amused to watch all the little devices in request, to join this party, to avoid that, to secure a seat in a certain carriage, or to escape from some other; Linton's chief amusement being to thwart as many of these plans as he could, and while he packed a sleepy Chief Justice into the same barouche with the gay Kennyfeck girls, to commit Lady Janet to the care of some dashing dragoon, who did not dare decline the wife of a "Commander of the Forces."

Cashel always joined the party on horseback, so long as Lady Kilgoff kept the house, which she did for the first week of her stay; but when she announced her intention of driving out, he offered his services to accompany her. By the merest accident it chanced that the very day she fixed on for her first excursion was that on which Cashel had determined to try a new and most splendid equipage which had just arrived. It was a phaeton, built in all the costly splendour of the "Regency of the Duke of Orleans"—one of those gorgeous toys which even a voluptuous age gazed at with wonder. Two jet-black Arabians, of perfect symmetry, drew it, the whole forming a most beautiful equipage.

Exclamations of astonishment and admiration broke from the whole party as the carriage drove up to the door, where all were now standing.

"Whose can it be?—Where did it come from?—What a magnificent phaeton! Mr. Cashel, pray tell us all about it. Do, Mr. Linton, give us its history."

"It has none as yet, my dear Mrs. White; that it may have, one of these days, is quite possible."

Lady Janet heard the speech, and nodded significantly in assent.

"Mr. Linton, you are coming with us, a'n't you?" said a lady's voice from a britschka close by.

"I really don't know how the arrangement is; Cashel said something about my driving Lady Kilgoff."

Lady Kilgoff pressed her lips close, and gathered her mantle together as if by some sudden impulse of temper, but never spoke a word. At the same instant Cashel made his appearance from the house.

"Are you to drive me, Mr. Cashel?" said she, calmly.

"If you will honour me so far," replied he, bowing.

"I fancied you said something to me about being her Ladyship's charioteer," said Linton.

"You must have been dreaming, man," cried Cashel, laughing.

"Will you allow my Lady to choose?" rejoined Linton, jokingly, while he stole at her a look of insolent malice.

Cashel stood uncertain what to say or do in the emergency, when, with a firm and determined voice, Lady Kilgoff said:

"I must own I have no confidence in Mr. Linton's guidance."

"There, Tom," said Cashel, gaily, "I'm glad your vanity came in for that."

"I have only to hope that you are in safer conduct, my Lady," said Linton; and he bowed with uncovered head, and then stood gazing after the swift carriage as it hastened down the avenue.

"Is it all true about these Kennyfeck girls having so much 'tin?'" said Captain Jennings, as he stroked down his moustache complacently.

"They say five-and-twenty thousand each," said Linton; "and I rather credit the rumour."

"Eh, aw! one might do worse," yawned the hussar, languidly; "I wish they hadn't that confounded accent!" And so he moved off to join the party on horseback.

"You are coming with me, Jemima," said Mr. Downie Meek to his daughter. "I want to pay a visit to those works at Killaloe, we have so much Committee talk in the House on inland navigation. Oh dear! it is very tiresome."

"Charley says I'm to go with him, Pa; he's about to try Smasher as a leader, and wants me, if anything goes wrong."

"Oh dear!—quite impossible."

"Yes, yes, Jim, I insist," said Frobisher, in a half-whisper; "never mind the Governor."

"Here comes the drag, Pa. Oh, how beautiful it looks! There they go, all together; and Smasher, how neatly he carries himself! I say, Charley, he has no fancy for that splinter-bar so near him—it touches his near hock every instant; wouldn't it be better to let his trace a hole looser?"

"So it would," said Frobisher; "but get up and hold the ribbons

till I have got my gloves on. I say, Linton, keep Downie in chat one moment, until we're off."

This kindly office was, however, anticipated by Lady Janet MacFarline, who, in her brief transit from the door to the carriage, always contrived to drop each of the twenty things she loaded herself with at starting, and thus to press into the service as many of the bystanders as possible, who followed, one with a muff, another with a smelling-bottle, a third with a book, a fourth with her knitting, and so on; while Flint brought up the rear with more air-cushions and hot-water apparatus than ever were seen before for the accommodation of two persons. In fact, if the atmosphere of our dear island, instead of being the mere innocent thing of fog it is, had been surcharged with all the pestilential vapours of the mistrale and the tiphoon together, she could not have armed herself with stronger precautions against it, while even Sir Andrew, with the constitution of a Russian bear, was compelled to wear blue spectacles in sunshine and a respirator when it loured; leaving him, as he said, to the "domnable alternative o' being blind or dumb."

"I maun say," muttered he, behind his barrier of mouth-plate, "that Mesther Cashel has his ain notions aboot amusin' his company when he leaves ane o' his guests to drive aboot wi' his ain wife. "Ech, Sir, it is a pleasure I need na hae come so far to enjoy."

"Where's Sir Harvey Upton, Sir Andrew?" said my Lady, tartly; "he has never been near me to-day. I hope he's not making a fool of himself with those Kennyfeck minxes."

"I dinna ken, and I dinna care," growled Sir Andrew; and then, to himself, he added, "An' if he be, it's aye better fooling wi' young lassies than doited auld women!"

"A place for *you*, Mr. Linton!" said Mrs. White, as she seated herself in a low drosky, where her companion, Mr. Howle, sat, surrounded with all the details for a sketching excursion.

"Thanks, but I have nothing so agreeable in prospect."

"Why, what are you about to do?"

"Alas! I must set out on a canvassing expedition, to court the sweet voices of my interesting constituency. You know that I am a candidate for the borough."

"That must be very disagreeable."

"It is; but I could not get off; Cashel is incurably lazy, and *I* never know how to say 'no.'"

"Well, good-by, and all fortune to you," said she; and they drove away.

Mr. Kennyfeck and the Chief Justice, mounted on what are called sure-footed ponies, and a few others, still lingered about the door, but Linton took no notice of them, but at once re-entered the house.

For some time previous he had remarked that Lord Kilgoff seemed,

as it were, struggling to emerge from the mist that had shrouded his faculties; his perceptions each day grew quicker and clearer, and even when silent, Linton observed that a shrewd expression of the eye would betoken a degree of apprehension few would have given him credit for. With the keenness of a close observer, too, Linton perceived that he more than once made use of his favourite expression, "It appears to *me*," and slight as the remark might seem, there is no more certain evidence of the return to thought and reason than the resumption of any habitual mode of expression.

Resolved to profit by this gleam of coming intelligence, by showing the old Peer an attention he knew would be acceptable, Linton sent up a message to ask "If his Lordship would like a visit from him?" A most cordial acceptance was returned; and, a few moments after, Linton entered the room where he sat, with all that delicate caution so becoming a sick-chamber.

Motioning his visitor to sit down, by a slight gesture of the finger, while he made a faint effort to smile, in return for the other's salutation, the old man sat, propped up by pillows, and enveloped in shawls, pale, sad, and careworn.

"I was hesitating for two entire days, my Lord," said Linton, lowering his voice to suit the character of the occasion, "whether I might propose to come and sit an hour with you, and I have only to beg that you will not permit me to trespass a moment longer than you feel disposed to endure me."

"Very kind of you—most considerate, Sir," said the old Peer, bowing with an air of haughty courtesy.

"You seem to gain strength every day, my Lord," resumed Linton, who well knew that there is nothing like a personal topic to awaken a sick man's interest.

"There is something here," said the old man, slowly, as he placed the tip of his finger on the centre of his forehead.

"Mere debility; nervous debility, my Lord. You are paying the heavy debt an over-worked intellect must always acquit; but rest and repose will soon restore you."

"Yes, Sir," muttered the other, with a weak smile, as though, without fathoming the sentiment, he felt that something agreeable to his feelings had been spoken.

"I have been impatient for your recovery, my Lord, I will confess to you, on personal grounds; I feel now how much I have been indebted to your Lordship's counsel and advice all through life, by the very incertitude that tracks me. In fact, I can resolve on nothing determine nothing, without your sanction."

The old man nodded assentingly; the assurance had his most sincere conviction.

"It would seem, my Lord, that I must—whether I will or no—stand for this borough, here; there is no alternative, for you are aware that Cashel is quite unfit for public business. Each day he exhibits more and more of those qualities which bespeak far more goodness of heart than intellectual training or culture. His waywardness and eccentricity might seriously damage his own party—could he even be taught that he had one—and become terrible weapons in the hands of the enemy. I was speaking of Cashel, my Lord," said Linton, as it were answering the look of inquiry in the old man's face.

"I hate him, Sir," said the old Peer, with a bitterness of voice and look that well suited the words.

"I really cannot wonder at it," said Linton, with a deep sigh; "such duplicity is too shocking—far too shocking—to contemplate."

"Eh!—what? What did you say, Sir?" cried the old man, impatiently.

"I was remarking, my Lord, that I have no confidence in his sincerity—that he strikes me as capable of playing a double part."

A look of disappointment succeeded to the excited expression of the old man's face; he had evidently expected some revelation, and now his features became clouded and gloomy.

"We may be unjust, my Lord," said Linton. "It may be a prejudice on our part; others would seem to have a different estimate of that gentleman. Meek thinks highly of him."

"Who, Sir; I didn't hear you?" asked he, snappishly.

"Meek—Downie Meek, my Lord."

"Pshaw!" said the old man, with a shrewd twinkle of the eye, that made Linton fear the mind behind it was clearer than he suspected.

"I know, my Lord," said he, hastily, "that you always held the worthy Secretary cheap; but you weighed him in a balance too nice for the majority of people——"

"What does that old woman say? Tell me *her* opinion of Cashel," said Lord Kilgoff, rallying into something like his accustomed manner. "You know whom I mean!" cried he, impatient at Linton's delay in answering; "the old woman one sees everywhere; she married that Scotch sergeant——"

"Lady Janet MacFarline——"

"Exactly, Sir."

"She thinks precisely with your Lordship."

"I'm sure of it; I told my Lady so," muttered he to himself.

Linton caught the words with eagerness, and his dark eyes kindled; for at last were they nearing the territory he wanted to occupy.

"Lady Kilgoff," said he, slowly, "does not need any aid to appreciate him; she reads him thoroughly, the heartless, selfish, unprincipled spendthrift that he is."

"She does not, Sir," rejoined the old man, with a loud voice, and a stroke of his cane upon the floor, that echoed through the room. "You never were more mistaken in your life. His insufferable puppyism, his reckless effrontery, his underbred familiarity, are precisely the very qualities she is pleased with. 'They are so different,' as she says, 'from the tiresome routine of fashionable manners.'"

"Unquestionably they are, my Lord," said Linton, with a smile.

"Exactly, Sir; they differ, as do her Ladyship's own habits from those of every Lady in the Peerage. I told her so. I begged to set her right on that subject at least."

"Your Lordship's refinement is a most severe standard," said Linton, bowing low.

"It should be an example, Sir, as well as a chastisement. Indeed, I believe few would have failed to profit by it." The air of insolent pride in which he spoke, seemed for an instant to have brought back the wonted look to his features, and he sat up, with his lips compressed, and his chin protruded, as in his days of yore.

"I would entreat your Lordship to remember," said Linton, "how few have studied in the same school you have; how few have enjoyed the intimacy of 'the most perfect gentleman of all Europe;' and of that small circle, who is there could have derived the same advantage from the privilege?"

"Your remark is very just, Sir. I owe much, very much, to his Royal Highness."

The tone of humility in which he said this was a high treat to the sardonic spirit of his listener.

"And what a penance to you must be a visit in such a house as this?" said Linton, with a sigh.

"True, Sir; but who induced me to make it? Answer me that."

Linton started with amazement, for he was very far from supposing that his Lordship's memory was clear enough to retain the events of an interview that occurred some months before.

"I never anticipated that it would cost you so dearly, my Lord," said he, cautiously, and prepared to give his words any turn events might warrant. For once, however, the ingenuity was wasted. Lord Kilgoff, wearied and exhausted by the increased effort of his intellect, had fallen back in his chair, and, with drooping lips and fallen jaw, sat the very picture of helpless fatuity.

"So, then," said Linton, as on tiptoe he stole noiselessly away, "if your memory was inopportune, it was, at least, very short-lived. And now, adieu, my Lord, till we want you for another act of the drama."

CHAPTER III.

We'll have you at our merry-making, too.
HONEYMOON.

If we should appear, of late, to have forgotten some of those friends with whom we first made our readers acquainted in this veracious history, we beg to plead against any charge of caprice or neglect. The cause is simply this: a story, like a stream, has one main current; and he who would follow the broad river, must eschew being led away by every rivulet which may separate from the great flood to follow its own vagrant fancy elsewhere. Now, the Kennyfecks had been meandering after this fashion for some time back. The elder had commenced a very vigorous flirtation with the dashing Captain Jennings, while the younger sister was coyly dallying under the attentions of his brother hussar—less, be it remembered, with any direct intention of surrender, than with the faint hope that Cashel, perceiving the siege, should think fit to rescue the fortress; "Aunt Fanny" hovering near, as "an army of observation," and ready, like the Prussians in the last war, to take part with the victorious side, whichever that might be.

And now, we ask in shame and sorrow, is it not humiliating to think, that of a party of some thirty or more, met together to enjoy in careless freedom the hospitality of a country-house, all should have been animated with the same spirit of intrigue—each bent on his own deep game, and, in some one guise or other of deceitfulness, each following out some scheme of selfish advantage?

Some may say these things are forced and unnatural; that Pleasure proclaims a truce in the great war of life, where combatants lay down their weapons, and mix like friends and allies. We fear this is not the case. Our own brief experiences would certainly tend to a different conclusion. Less a player than a looker-on in the great game, we have seen, through all the excitements of dissipation, all the fascinating pleasures of the most brilliant circles, the steady onward pursuit of self-interest; and, instead of the occasions of social enjoyment being like the palm-shaded wells in the desert, where men meet to taste the peacefulness of perfect rest, they are rather the arena where, in all the glitter of the most splendid armour, the combatants have come to tilt, with more than life upon the issue.

For this, the beauty wreathes herself in all the winning smiles of loveliness; for this, the courtier puts forth his most captivating address and his most seductive manner; for this, the wit sharpens the keen edge of his fancy, and the statesman matures the deep resolve of his judgment. The diamond coronets that deck the hair and add

lustre to the eyes—the war-won medals that glitter on the coat of some hardy veteran—the proud insignia of merit that a Sovereign's favour grants—all are worn to this end! Each brings to the game whatever he may possess of superiority, for the contest is ever a severe one.

And now to go back to our company. From Lady Janet, intent upon everything which might minister to her own comfort or mortify her neighbour, to the smooth and soft-voiced Downie Meek—with the kindest of wishes and the coldest of hearts—they were, we grieve to own it, far more imposing to look at, full dressed at dinner, than to investigate by the searching anatomy that discloses the vices and foibles of humanity; and it is, therefore, with less regret we turn from the great house, in all the pomp of its splendour, to the humble cottage, where Mr. Corrigan dwelt with his granddaughter.

In wide contrast to the magnificence and profusion of the costly household, where each seemed bent on giving way to every caprice that extravagance could suggest, was the simple quietude of that unpretending family. The efforts by which Corrigan had overcome his difficulties, not only cost him all the little capital he possessed in the world, but had also necessitated a mode of living more restricted than he had ever known before. The little luxuries that his station, as well as his age and long use, had made necessaries—the refinements that adorn even the very simplest lives—had all to be, one by one, surrendered. Some of these he gave up manfully, others cost him deeply; and when the day came that he had to take leave of his old grey pony, the faithful companion of so many a lonely ramble, the creature he had reared and petted like a dog, the struggle was almost too much for him.

He walked along beside the man who led the beast to the gate, telling him to be sure and seek out some one who would treat her kindly: "Some there are would do so for my sake; but she deserves it better for her own.—Yes, Nora, I'm speaking of you," said he, caressing her, as she laid her nose over his arm. "I'm sure I never thought we'd have to part."

"She's good as goold this minit," said the man; "an' it'll go hard but I'll get six pounds for her, any way."

"Tell whoever buys her that Mr. Corrigan will give him a crown-piece every Christmas-day that he sees her looking well and in good heart. To be sure, it's no great bribe, we're both so old," said he, smiling; "but my blessing goes with the man that's a friend to her." He sat down as he said this, and held his hand over his face till she was gone. "God forgive me if I set my heart too much on such things, but it's like parting with an old friend. Poor Mary's harp must go next. But here comes Tiernay. Well, Doctor, what news?"

The Doctor shook his head twice or thrice despondingly, but said nothing; at last, he muttered, in a grumbling voice:

"I was twice at the Hall, but there's no seeing Cashel himself; an insolent puppy of a valet turned away contemptuously as I asked for him, and said:

"'Mr. Linton, perhaps, might hear what you have to say.'"

"Is Kennyfeck to be found?"

"Yes, I saw him for a few minutes; but he's like the rest of them; the old fool fancies he's a man of fashion here, and told me he had left 'the Attorney' behind, in Merrion-square. He half confessed to me, however, what I feared. Cashel has either given a promise to give this farm of yours to Linton——"

"Well, the new landlord will not be less kind than the old one."

"You think so," said Tiernay, sternly. "Is your knowledge of life no better than this? Have you lived till now without being able to read that man? Come, come, Corrigan, don't treat this as a prejudice of mine. I have watched him closely, and he sees it. I tell you again, the fellow is a villain."

"Ay, ay," said Corrigan, laughing; "your doctor's craft has made you always on the look-out for some hidden mischief."

"My doctor's craft has taught me to know that symptoms are never without a meaning. But enough of him; the question is simply this: we have, then, merely to propose to Cashel the purchase of your interest in the cottage, on which you will cede the possession."

"Yes; and give up, besides, all claim at law, for you know we are supported by the highest opinions."

"Pooh—nonsense, man; don't embarrass the case by a pretension they're sure to sneer at. The cottage and the little fields behind it are tangible and palpable; don't weaken your case by a plea you could not press."

"Have your own way, then," said the old man, mildly.

"It is an annuity, you say, you'd wish."

"On Mary's life, not on mine, Doctor."

"It will be a poor thing," said Tiernay, with a sigh.

"They say we could live in some of the towns in Flanders very cheaply," said Corrigan, cheerfully.

"You don't know how to live cheaply," rejoined Tiernay, crankily. "You think, if you don't see a man in black behind your chair, and that you eat off delf instead of silver, that you are a miracle of simplicity. I saw you last Sunday put by the decanter with half a glass of sherry at the bottom of it, and you were as proud of your thrift as if you had reformed your whole household."

"Everything is not learned in a moment, Tiernay," said Corrigan, mildly.

"You are too old to begin, Con Corrigan," said the other, gravely; "such men as you, who have not been educated to narrow fortunes, never learn thrift; they can endure great privations well enough, but it is the little, petty, dropping ones that break down the spirit —these, they cannot meet."

"A good conscience and a strong will can do a great deal, Tiernay. One thing is certain, that we shall escape persecution from *him*. *He* will scarcely discover us in our humble retreat."

"I've thought of that, too," said Tiernay. "It is the greatest advantage the plan possesses. Now, the next point is, how to see this same Cashel; from all that I can learn, his life is one of dissipation from morning till night. Those fashionable sharpers by whom he is surrounded are making him pay dearly for his admission into the honourable guild."

"The greater the pity," sighed Corrigan; "he appeared to me deserving of a different fate. An easy, complying temper——"

"The devil a worse fault I'd wish my enemy," broke in Tiernay, passionately. "A field without a fence—a house without a door to it! And there, if I am not mistaken, I hear his voice: yes, he's coming along the path, and some one with him, too."

"I'll leave you to talk to him, Tiernay, for you seem in 'the vein.'" And with these words the old man turned into a by-path, just as Cashel, with Lady Kilgoff on his arm, advanced up the avenue.

Nothing is more remarkable than the unconscious homage tendered to female beauty and elegance by men whose mould of mind, as well as habit, would seem to render them insensible to such fascinations, nor is their instinctive admiration a tribute which beauty ever despises.

The change which came over the rough Doctor's expression as the party came nearer exemplified this truth strongly. The look of stern determination with which he was preparing to meet Cashel changed to one of astonishment, and, at last, to undisguised admiration, as he surveyed the graceful mien and brilliant beauty before him. They had left the phaeton at the little wicket, and the exercise on foot had slightly coloured her cheek, and added animation to her features —the only aid necessary to make her loveliness perfect.

"I have taken a great liberty with my neighbour, Doctor Tiernay," said Cashel, as he came near. "Let me present you, however, first—Doctor Tiernay, Lady Kilgoff. I had been telling her Ladyship that the only picturesque portion of this country lies within this holly enclosure, and is the property of my friend Mr. Corrigan, who, although he will not visit me, will not, I'm sure, deny me the pleasure of showing his tasteful grounds to my friends."

"My old friend would be but too proud of such a visitor," said Tiernay, bowing low to Lady Kilgoff.

"Mr. Cashel has not confessed all our object, Mr. Tiernay," said she, assuming her most gracious manner. "Our visit has in prospect the hope of making Miss Leicester's acquaintance; as I know you are the intimate friend of the family, will you kindly say if this be a suitable hour, or, indeed, if our presence here at all would not be deemed an intrusion?"

The Doctor coloured deeply, and his eye sparkled with pleasure, for, strange enough as it may appear, while sneering at the dissipations of the great house, he felt a degree of indignant anger at the thought of Mary sitting alone and neglected, with gaieties around her on every side.

"It was a most thoughtful kindness of your Ladyship," replied he, "for my friend is too old and too infirm to seek society, and, so, the poor child has no other companionship than two old men, only fit to weary each other."

"You make me hope that our mission will succeed, Sir," said Lady Kilgoff, still employing her most fascinating look and voice "we may reckon you as an ally, I trust."

"I am your Ladyship's most devoted," said the old man, courteously; "how can I be of service?"

"Our object is to induce Miss Leicester to pass some days with us," said she; "we are plotting various amusements that might interest her—private theatricals among the rest."

"Here she comes, my Lady," said Tiernay, with animation; "I am proud to be the means of introducing her."

Just at this instant Mary Leicester had caught sight of the party, and uncertain whether to advance or retire, was standing for a moment undecided, when Tiernay called out,

"Stay a minute, Miss Mary; Lady Kilgoff is anxious to make your acquaintance."

"This is a very informal mode of opening an intimacy, Miss Leicester," said Lady Kilgoff; "pray let it have the merit of sincerity, for I have long desired to know one of whom I have heard so much."

Mary replied courteously to the speech, and looked pleasedly towards Cashel, to whom she justly attributed the compliment insinuated.

As the two ladies moved on side by side, engaged in conversation, Tiernay slackened his pace slightly, and in a voice of low but earnest import, said,

"Will Mr. Cashel consider it an intrusion if I take this opportunity of speaking to him on a matter of business?"

"Not in the least, Doctor," said Cashel, gaily; "but it's right I should mention that I am most lamentably ignorant of everything that deserves that name. My agent has always saved me from the confession, but the truth will out at last."

"So much the worse, Sir—for others, as well as for yourself," replied Tiernay, bluntly. "The trust a large fortune imposes——but I shall forget myself, if I touch on such a theme. My business is this, Sir—and, in mercy to you, I'll make it very brief. My old friend, Mr. Corrigan, deems it expedient to leave this country, and, in consequence, to dispose of the interest he possesses in these grounds, so long embellished by his taste and culture. He is well aware that much of what he has expended here has not added substantial value to the property; that, purely ornamental, it has, in great part, repaid himself by the many years of enjoyment it has afforded him. Still he hopes—or rather, I do for him—for, to speak candidly, Sir, *he* has neither courage nor hardihood for these kind of transactions—I hope, Sir, that you, desirous of uniting this farm to the large demesne—as I understand to be the case—will not deem this an unfitting occasion to treat liberally with one whose position is no longer what it once was. I must take care, Mr. Cashel, that I say nothing which looks like solicitation here; the confidence my friend has placed in me would be ill requited by such an error."

"Is there no means of securing Mr. Corrigan's residence here?" said Cashel. "Can I not accommodate his wishes in some other way, and which should not deprive me of a neighbour I prize so highly?"

"I fear not. The circumstances which induce him to go abroad are imperative."

"Would it not be better to reflect on this?" said Cashel. "I do not seek to pry into concerns which are not mine; but I would earnestly ask if some other arrangement be not possible?"

Tiernay shook his head dubiously.

"If this be so, then I can oppose no longer. It only remains for Mr. Corrigan to put his own value on the property, and I accept it."

"Nay, Sir; this generosity will but raise new difficulties. You are about to deal with a man as high-hearted as yourself, and with the punctilious delicacy that a narrow fortune suggests, besides."

"Do you, then, Doctor, who know both of us, be arbitrator. Let it not be a thing for parchments and lawyers' clerks. Let it be an honourable understanding between two gentlemen, and so, no more of it."

"If the world were made up of men like yourself and my old friend, this would be, doubtless, the readiest and the best solution of the difficulty," said Tiernay; "but what would be said if we con-

sented to such an arrangement? What would not be said? Ay, faith, there's not a scandalous rumour that malice could forge would not be rife upon us."

"And do you think such calumnies have any terror for *me?*" cried Cashel.

"When you've lived to *my* age, Sir, you'll reason differently."

"It shall be all as you wish, then," said Cashel. "But stay!" cried he, after a moment's thought; "there is a difficulty I had almost forgotten. I must look that it may not interfere with our plans. When can I see you again? Would it suit you to come and breakfast with me to-morrow? I'll have my man of business, and we'll arrange everything."

"Agreed, Sir; I'll not fail. I like your promptitude. A favour is a double benefit when speedily granted."

"Now I shall ask one from you, Doctor. If I can persuade my kind friends here to visit us, will you, too, be of the party sometimes?"

"Not a bit of it. Why should I, Sir, expose you to the insolent criticism my unpolished manners and rude address would bring upon you—or myself to the disdain that fashionable folk would show me? I am proud—too proud, perhaps—at the confidence you would repose in my honour; I don't wish to blush for my breeding by way of recompense. There, Sir—there is one yonder in every way worthy all the distinction rank and wealth can give her. I feel happy to think that she is to move amongst those who, if they cannot prize her worth, will at least appreciate her fascinations."

"Will Mr. Corrigan consent?"

"He must—he shall," broke in Tiernay; "I'll insist upon it. But come along with me into the cottage, while the ladies are cementing their acquaintance; we'll see him, and talk him over."

So saying, he led Cashel into the little library, where, deep sunk in his thoughts, the old man was seated, with an open book before him, but of which he had not read a line.

"Con!" cried Tiernay, "Mr. Cashel has come to bring you and Miss Mary up to the Hall, to dinner. There, Sir, look at the face he puts on; an excuse in every wrinkle of it."

"But, my dear friend—my worthy Doctor—you know perfectly——"

"I'll know perfectly that you must go—no help for it. I have told Mr. Cashel that you'd make fifty apologies—pretend age—ill-health—want of habit, and so on: the valid reason being that you think his company a set of raffs, and——"

"Oh, Tiernay, I beg you'll not ascribe such sentiments to *me*."

"Well, I thought so myself, t'other day—ay, half an hour ago; but

there is a lady yonder, walking up and down the grass-plot, has made me change my mind; come out and see her, man, and then say as many 'No's' as you please." And, half-dragging, half-leading the old man out, Tiernay went on:

"You'll see, Mr. Cashel, how polite he'll grow when he sees the bright eyes and the fair cheek. You'll not hear of any more refusals then, I promise you."

Meanwhile, so far had Lady Kilgoff advanced in the favourable opinion of Miss Leicester, that the young girl was already eager to accept the proffered invitation. Old Mr. Corrigan, however, could not be induced to leave his home, and so it was arranged that Lady Kilgoff should drive over on the following day to fetch her; with which understanding they parted, each looking forward with pleasure to their next meeting.

CHAPTER IV.

Gone! and in secret, too!

Amid all the plans for pleasure which engaged the attention of the great house, two subjects now divided the interest between them. One was the expected arrival of the beautiful Miss Leicester—"Mr. Cashel's babe in the wood," as Lady Janet called her—the other, the reading of a little one-act piece, which Mr. Linton had written for the company. Although both were, in their several ways, "events," the degree of interest they excited was very disproportioned to their intrinsic consequence, and can only be explained by dwelling on the various intrigues and schemes by which that little world was agitated.

Lady Janet, whose natural spitefulness was a most catholic feeling, began to fear that Lady Kilgoff had acquired such an influence over Cashel, that she could mould him to any course she pleased—even a marriage. She suspected, therefore, that this rustic beauty had been selected by her Ladyship as one very unlikely to compete with herself in Roland's regard, and that she was thus securing a lasting ascendancy over him.

Mrs. Leicester White, who saw, or believed she saw, herself neglected by Roland, took an indignant view of the matter, and threw out dubious and shadowy suspicions about "who this young lady might be, who seemed so opportunely to have sprung up in the neighbourhood," and expressed, in confidence, her great surprise, "how Lady Kilgoff could lend herself to such an arrangement."

Mrs. Kennyfeck was outraged at the entrance of a new competitor

into the field, where her daughter was no longer a "favourite." In fact, the new visitor's arrival was heralded by no signs of welcome, save from the young men of the party, who naturally were pleased to hear that a very handsome and attractive girl was expected.

As for Aunt Fanny, her indignation knew no bounds; indeed, ever since she had set foot in the house her state had been one little short of insanity. In her own very graphic phrase—"She was fit to be tied at all she saw." Now, when an elderly maiden lady thus comprehensively sums up the cause of her anger, without descending to "a bill of particulars," the chances are, that some personal wrong—real or imaginary—is more in fault than anything reprehensible in the case she is so severe upon. So was it here: Aunt Fanny literally saw nothing, although she heard a great deal. Daily, hourly, were the accusations of the whole Kennyfeck family directed against her for the loss of Cashel. But for her, and her absurd credulity on the statement of an anonymous letter, and there had been no yacht voyage with Lady Kilgoff—no shipwreck—no life in a cabin on the coast—no——In a word, all these events had either not happened at all, or only occurred with Livy Kennyfeck for their heroine.

Roland's cold, almost distant politeness to the young ladies, was marked enough to appear intentional; nor could all the little by-play of flirtation with others excite in him the slightest evidence of displeasure. If the family were outraged at this change, poor Livy herself bore up admirably; and while playing a hundred little attractive devices for Cashel, succeeded in making a very deep impression on the well-whiskered Sir Harvey Upton, of the —th. Indeed, as Linton, who saw everything, shrewdly remarked—"She may not pocket the ball she intended, but, rely on't, she'll make a 'hazard' somewhere."

Of all that great company, but one alone found no place in her heart for some secret wile; this was Miss Meek, who, sadly disappointed at the little influence of her royalty, had ceased to care much for in-door affairs, and spent her mornings "schooling" with Charley, and her evenings listening to sporting talk whenever two or three "fast men" got together in the drawing-room.

The evening that preceded Miss Leicester's intended arrival had been fixed for the reading of Mr. Linton's comedy—a little dramatic piece, which, whether he had stolen wholesale from the French, or only borrowed in part, none knew; but various were the rumours that it would turn out to be a very satirical composition, with allusions to many of those who were to sit in judgment over it. How this supposition originated, or with whom, there is no saying, nor if well-founded in any respect, for Linton had never shown his sketch to any one, nor alluded to it, save in the most vague manner.

Each, however, looked to see his neighbour "shown up;" and while one said, "What a character could be made of old Sir Andrew, with his vulgarity, his deafness, and his gluttony!" another thought that Downie Meek, in his oily smoothness, his sighings, and his "dear me's," would be admirable—all the ladies averring that Lady Kilgoff would be a perfect embodiment of Lady Teazle, as "Sir Peter" suspected, and "Joseph" intended her to be.

Fears for individual safety were merged in hopes of seeing others assailed, and it was in something like a flutter of expectancy that the party assembled in the drawing-room before dinner. Great was their surprise to find that Mr. Linton did not make his appearance. The dinner was announced, but he never came, and his place vacant at the foot of the table was the continual suggester of every possible reason for his absence. If Lady Kilgoff could not divest herself of a certain terror—vague and meaningless, it is true—the dread she felt proceeded from knowing him to be one whose every act had some deep purpose; while others were then canvassing his absence in easy freedom, she took the first opportunity of asking Cashel whether he were in the secret, or if it were really true that Linton had not communicated, even with him, about his departure.

"I am no better informed than my friends here," said Roland; "and, to say truth, I have given myself little thought about the matter. We have not, as you are aware, of late seen so much of each other as we used once; he has himself rather drawn off me, and I have left the interval between us to widen without much regret."

"Remember, however, what I told you; he can be a terrible enemy."

Cashel smiled calmly as he said, "I have consorted with men whose vengeance never took longer to acquit than the time occupied in drawing a knife from the sleeve or a pistol from the girdle. I care very little for him whose weapon is mere subtlety."

"It is this over-confidence makes me fear for you," said she, anxiously; "for, I say again, you do not know him."

"I wish I never had," said Cashel, with an earnestness of voice and accent. "He has involved me in a hundred pursuits for which I feel neither taste nor enjoyment. To him I owe it that pleasure is always associated in my mind with mere debauch; and the only generosity he has taught me has been the spendthrift waste of the gaming-table."

"Could you not find out something of him—when he went, and in what direction?" said she, anxiously. "I cannot tell you why, but my heart misgives me about his departure."

More in compliance with her scruples than that he deemed the matter worth a thought, Cashel left the room to make inquiries from

the servants; but all he could learn was, that Mr. Linton arose before daybreak and left the house on foot; his own servant not knowing in what direction, nor having heard anything of his master's previous intention.

His intimacy with the family at the cottage left it possible that they might know something of his movements, and Cashel accordingly despatched a messenger thither to ask; but with the same fruitless result as every previous inquiry.

While Cashel was following up this search with a degree of interest that increased as the difficulty augmented, he little knew how watchfully his every word and gesture was noted down by one who stood at his side. This was Mr. Phillis, who, while seeming to participate in his master's astonishment, threw out from time to time certain strange, vague hints, less suggestive of his own opinions, than as baits to attract those of his master.

"Very odd, indeed, Sir—very strange—so regular a gentleman, too—always rising at the same hour. His man says, he's like the clock. To be sure," added he, after a pause, "his manner is changed of late."

"How do you mean?" asked Cashel, hurriedly.

"He seems anxious, Sir—uneasy, as one might say."

"I have not perceived it."

"His man says——"

"What care I for that," said Cashel, impatiently. "It is not to pry into Mr. Linton's habits that I am here; it is to assure myself that no accident has happened to him, and that, if he stand in need of my assistance, I shall not be neglecting him. Tell two of the grooms to take horses, and ride down to Killaloe and Dunkeeran, and ask at the inns there if he has been seen. Let them make inquiry, too, along the road." With these directions, hastily given, he returned to the drawing-room; his mind far more interested in the event than he knew how to account for.

"No tidings of Tom?" said Lord Charles Frobisher, lounging carelessly in a well-cushioned chair.

Cashel made a sign in the negative.

"Well, it's always a satisfaction to his friends to know that he'll not come to harm," said he, with an ambiguous smile.

"The country is much disturbed at this moment," said the Chief Justice; "the calendar was a very heavy one last Assize. I trust no marauding party may have laid hold of him."

"Ah, yes; that would be very sad indeed," sighed Meek, "mistaking him for a spy."

"No great blunder, after all," said Lady Janet, almost loud enough for other ears than her next neighbour's.

"If the night were moonlight," said Miss Meek, as she opened a shutter and peeped out into the darkness, "I'd say he was trying those fences we have laid out for the hurdle-race."

"By Jove, Jim, that is a shrewd thought!" said Lord Charles, forgetting that he was addressing her by a familiar sobriquet he never used before company.

"You have a bet with him, Charley?" said Upton.

"Yes, we have all manner of bets on the race, and I'll have one with you, if you like it—an even fifty that Tom turns up 'all right and no accident,' after this bolt."

"Ah, my Lord, you're in the secret, then!" said Aunt Fanny, whose experiences of sporting transactions, derived from "the West," induced her to suspect that a wager contained a trap-fall.

A very cool stare was the only acknowledgment he deigned to return to this speech, while Mrs. Kennyfeck looked unutterable reproaches at her unhappy relative.

"I call the present company to witness," said Sir Harvey Upton, "that if Tom has come to an untimely end, he has bequeathed to me his brown cob pony, 'Batter.'"

"I protest against the gift," said Miss Kennyfeck. "Mr. Linton told me, if he were killed in the steeple-chase on Tuesday next, I should have 'Batter.'"

"That was a special reservation, Miss Kennyfeck," said the Chief Justice; "so that if his death did not occur in the manner specified, the deed or gift became null and void."

"I only know," said Miss Meek, "that Mr. Linton said, as we came back from the hurdle-field—'Remember, "Batter" is yours, if —if——'" She hesitated and grew red, and then stopped speaking, in evident shame and confusion.

"If what? tell us the condition; you are bound to be candid," said several voices together.

"I'll tell *you*, but I'll not tell any one else," said the young girl, turning to Lady Kilgoff; and at the same instant she whispered in her ear, "If I were to be married to Mr. Cashel."

"Well," said her Ladyship, laughing, "and was the bribe sufficient?"

"I should think not!" replied she, with a scornful toss of the head, as she walked back to her seat.

"I winna say," said Sir Andrew, "but I ha' a bit claim mysel to that bonnie snuff-box he ca'd a Louis-Quatorze; if ye mind, leddies, I asked him to mak' me a present o' it, and he replied—'In my weell, Sir Andrew; I'll leave it ye in my weell.'"

"I foresee there will be abundance of litigation," said the Chief Justice, "for the claims are both numerous and conflicting."

"You'll not be troubled with the next of kin, I believe," said Lady Janet, in her most spiteful of voices.

"I say, my Lord Chief Justice," said Frobisher, "let me have a travelling opinion from you, on a legal point. Wouldn't Linton's heirs, or representatives, or whatever they're called, be bound to 'book up' if Ramskin is beaten in the handicap?"

"The law expressly declares such transactions without its pale, my Lord," said the Judge, rebukingly.

"Well, I can only say," interrupted Upton, "that when we were in cantonments at Sickmabund, Jack Faris 'of ours' had a heavy stake in a game of piquet with the Major, and just as he was going to count his point, he gave a tremendous yell, and jumped up from the table. It was a cobra capella had bitten him in the calf of the leg. Everything was done for him at once, but all in vain; he swelled up to the size of four, and died in about two hours. It was rather hard on old Cox, the Major, who had two hundred pounds on it, and a capital hand; and so he made a representation to the Mess, showing that he had seven cards to his point, with a quint in hearts; that, taking in the ace of clubs, he should count a quatorze, and, therefore, unquestionably win the game. The thing was clear as day, and so they awarded him the stakes. Cox behaved very handsomely, too; for he said, 'If Faris's widow likes to play the game out, I'll give her the opportunity when we get back to England, and back myself, two to one.'"

"The Chevalier Bayard himself could not have done more," said Miss Kennyfeck, with admirable gravity.

"I must say," resumed the dragoon, "we thought it handsome, for old Cox was always hard up for money."

"And what is to become of our theatricals, if Mr. Linton should have been so ill-natured as to drown himself?" said Mrs. White, in a most disconsolate tone; for she had already made terrible havoc in her wardrobe to accomplish a Turkish costume.

"Such a disappointment as it will be," sighed Olivia Kennyfeck, who had speculated on a last effort upon Cashel in a Mexican dress, where, certes, superfluity should not be the fault.

"You can always make some compensation for the disappointment," said Lady Kilgoff, "by a fancy ball."

"Oh, delightful! the very thing!" exclaimed several together. "When shall it be, Mr. Cashel?"

"I am entirely at your orders," said he, bowing courteously.

"Shall we say Tuesday, then?"

"Not Tuesday; we have the race on that morning," said Frobisher; and some of us, at least, will be too tired for a ball afterwards."

"Well, Wednesday; is Wednesday open?"

"Wednesday was fixed for a boat excursion to Holy Island," said Cashel.

"You can't have Thursday, then," exclaimed Lady Janet; "that is the only evening we ever have our rubber. I'll not give you Thursday."

"Friday we are to have some people at dinner," said Cashel; "and Saturday was to have been some piece of electioneering festivity for Linton's constituents."

"What matter now," said Mrs. White; "perhaps the poor dear man is in a better place; a very sad thought," sighed she, "but such things are happening every day."

"Ah, yes, very sad," responded Meek, who never failed to perform echo to any one's lamentation.

"Ah, indeed!" chimed in Aunt Fanny, "cut off like a daisy." And she wiped her eyes and looked solemn, for she believed she was quoting Scripture.

At last it was decided that the ball should come off on the earliest evening possible, irrespective of all other arrangements; and now the company formed in a great circle, discussing dresses and characters and costumes with an eager interest, that showed how little Linton's fate had thrown a shadow over the bright picture of anticipated pleasure.

CHAPTER V.

He could outrogue a lawyer.
OLDHAM.

REVEALING so freely as we do the hidden wiles of our characters for the reader's pleasure, it would ill become us to affect any reserve or mystery regarding their actions. We shall not make, therefore, any secret of Mr. Linton's absence, nor ask of our patient reader to partake of the mystification that prevailed among the company at Tubbermore.

It so chanced, that on the evening preceding his departure he saw in a newspaper paragraph the arrival of a very distinguished lawyer at Limerick on his way to Dublin, and the thought at once occurred to him, that the opportunity was most favourable for obtaining an opinion respecting the "Corrigan Pardon," without incurring either suspicion or any lengthened absence.

Another object, inferior, but not devoid of interest, also suggested itself. It was this: profiting by a secret passage which led from the theatre to Cashel's bedroom, it was Linton's custom to visit this

chamber every day, ransacking the letters and papers which, in his careless indolence, Roland left loose upon the tables, and thus possessing himself of the minutest knowledge of Cashel's affairs. In his very last visit to this room, he perceived a cumbrous document, of which the seal on the envelope was broken, but apparently the contents unlooked at. It was enough that he read the endorsement, "Deed of Conveyance of the Cottage and Lands of Tubber-beg."

Feeling how far he himself was interested in the paper, and well knowing the forgetful habits of Cashel, who would never detect its removal, he coolly folded it up and carried it away.

At first, his intention was simply to peruse the paper at his ease, and, if need were, to show it in confidence to Corrigan, and thus establish for himself that degree of influence over the old man which the character of his landlord might convey. But another and a bolder expedient soon suggested itself to his mind—nor was he one to shrink from an enterprise merely on account of its hazard—and this was no less than to forge Cashel's signature to the deed—for, as yet, it was wanting in that most essential particular.

That Roland would never remember anything of the matter, and that he would always incline to believe his own memory defective, than suppose such a falsification possible, Linton was well convinced. There was but one difficulty: how should he manage for the witnesses, whose names were to be appended, as actually present at the moment of signing. Here was a stumbling-block—since he could scarcely hope to find others as short of memory as was Roland Cashel. It was while still canvassing the question in his mind that he came upon the intelligence in the newspaper of the lawyer's arrival at Limerick, and suddenly it struck him that he could easily in that city find out two persons, who, for a sufficient consideration, would append their signatures to the deed. A little further reflection devised even an easier plan, which was to take along with him the Italian sailor Giovanni, and make him represent Cashel, whose appearance was quite unknown. By Giovanni's personation of Roland, Linton escaped all the hazard of letting others into his confidence, while the sailor himself, in a few days more, would leave the country—never to return.

It was with the calm assurance of a man who could put a price upon any action required of him, that Giovanni found himself, an hour after midnight, summoned to Linton's dressing-room.

"I told you some time back, Giovanni, that we might be serviceable to each other. The hour has come a little earlier than I looked for; and now the question is, are you of the same mind as you then were?"

"I know nothing of the laws of this country, Signor, but if there be life on the issue——"

"No, no, nothing like that, my worthy fellow. In the present case, all I ask for is your silence and your secrecy."

"Oh, that is easily had—go on, Signor."

"Well, I wish to go over to-morrow by daybreak to Limerick. I desire, too, that you should accompany me—as my companion, however, and my equal. We are about the same height and size, so take that suit there, dress yourself, and wait for me at the cross-roads below the village."

The Italian took the parcel without speaking, and was about to retire, when Linton said:

"You can write, I suppose?"

The other nodded.

"I shall want you to sign a document in presence of witnesses—not your own name, but another, which I'll tell you."

The Italian's dark eyes flashed with a keen and subtle meaning, and leaning forward, he said, in a low, distinct tone,

"His Excellency means that I should forge a name?"

"It is scarcely deserving so grave a phrase," replied Linton, affecting an easy smile; "but what I ask amounts pretty much to that. Have you scruples about it?"

"My scruples are not easily alarmed, Signor; only let us understand each other. I'll do *anything*"—and he laid a deep emphasis on the word—"when I see my way clear before me, nothing, when I'm blindfolded."

"A man after my own heart!" cried Linton; "and now, good night. Be true to the time and place." And with this they parted.

The grey mist of a winter morning was just clearing away as Linton, accompanied by Giovanni, drove up to the principal hotel of Limerick, where Mr. Hammond, the eminent barrister, was then stopping. Having ascertained that he was still in the house, Linton at once sent up his name, with a request to be admitted to an interview with him. The position he had so long enjoyed among the officials of the Viceroy had made Linton a person of considerable importance in a city where the "plated article" so often passes for silver; and no sooner had the lawyer read the name, than he immediately returned a polite answer, saying that he was perfectly at Mr. Linton's orders.

The few inquiries which Mr. Linton had meanwhile made at the bar of the hotel, informed him that Mr. Hammond was making all haste to England, where he was about to appear in a case before the House of Lords; that horses had been already ordered for him along the whole line of road, and his presence in London was imperative. Armed with these facts, Linton entered the room, where, surrounded with deeds, drafts, and Acts of Parliament, the Learned Counsel was sitting at his breakfast.

"It was but last night late, Mr. Hammond," said he, advancing with his very frankest manner, "that we caught sight of your name as having arrived here, and you see I have lost no time in profiting by the intelligence. I have come thirty Irish miles this day to catch and carry you off with me to Mr. Cashel's, at Tubbermore."

"Most kind, indeed—very flattering—I am really overpowered," said the lawyer, actually reddening with pleasure; and he said the exact truth, he was "overpowered" by a compliment so little expected. For, although high in his profession, and in considerable repute among his brethren, he had never been admitted into that peculiar class which calls itself the first society of the metropolis.

"I assure you," resumed Linton, "it was by a vote of the whole house I undertook my mission. The Kilgoffs, the MacFarlines, the Chief Justice, Meek, and—in fact, all your friends are there—and we only want *you* to make the party complete."

"I cannot express the regret—the very deep regret—I feel at being obliged to decline such an honour; one which, I am free to confess, actually takes me by surprise. But, my dear Mr. Linton, you see these weighty papers—that formidable heap yonder——"

"Meek said so," said Linton, interrupting, and at the same time assuming a look of deep despondency. "'Hammond will refuse,' said he. 'There's no man at the Irish Bar has the same amount of business; he cannot give his friends even one hour from his clients.'"

"I'm sure I scarcely suspected the Right Honourable Secretary knew of me," said Hammond, blushing between pleasure and shame.

"Downie not know of you!—not know Mr. Hammond!—come, come—this may do for a bit of quiz in those Irish newspapers that are always affecting to charge English officials with ignorance of the distinguished men, here; but I cannot permit Mr. Hammond himself to throw out the aspersion, nor, indeed, can I suffer Meek, one of my oldest friends, to lie under the obloquy. I need not tell one so much more capable of appreciating these things than myself, how every administration comes into office with a host of followers far more eager for place, and infinitely more confident of high deservings, than the truly capable men of the party. These 'locusts' eat up the first harvest, but, happily for humanity, they rarely live for a second."

Linton leaned back in his chair, and appeared to be taking counsel with himself, and at length, as if having formed his resolve, said,

"Of course frankness with such a man is never a mistaken policy."

And with this muttered soliloquy again became silent

CHAPTER VI.

It was not "Flattery" he sold, but "Hope."
BELL.

WE left Mr. Linton and Mr. Hammond seated opposite each other, the former lost in seeming reflection, the latter awaiting with eager expectancy for something which might explain the few strange words he had just listened to.

"May I venture on a bit of confidence, Mr. Hammond," said Linton, clearing his brow as he spoke; "you'll never betray me?"

"Never—on my honour."

"Never, willingly, I well know; but I mean, will you strictly keep what I shall tell you—for yourself alone—because, as I am the only depositary of the fact, it would be inevitable ruin to me if it got about?"

"I give you my solemn pledge—I promise."

"Quite enough—well——" Here he leaned on the other's shoulder, and putting his lips close to his ear, said: "Malone will retire—Repton will be Chief—and"—here he prodded the listener with his finger—"Attorney-General."

"You mean me, Sir—do you mean that I am to be Attor——"

"Hush!" said Linton, in a long low note; "do not breathe it, even in your sleep! If I know these things, it is because I am trusted in quarters where men of far more influence are hoodwinked. Were I once to be suspected of even this much, it would be 'up' with me for ever."

"My dear friend—will you pardon me for calling you so?—I'd suffer the torture of the rack before I'd divulge one syllable of it. I own to you, my family, and my friends in general, have not been patient under what they deemed the Government neglect of me."

"And with too good reason, Sir," said Linton, assuming the look and air of a moraliser. "And do you know why you have been passed over, Mr. Hammond? I'll tell you, Sir; because your talents were too brilliant, and your integrity too spotless, for promotion, in times when inferior capacities and more convenient consciences were easier tools to handle!—Because you are not a man who, once placed in a conspicuous position, can be consigned to darkness and neglect when his capabilities have been proved to the world!—Because your knowledge, Sir, your deep insight into the political condition of this country, would soon have placed you above the heads of the very men who appointed you. But times are changed: capable men, zealous

men—ay, Sir, and I will say, great men—are in request now. The Public *will* have them, and Ministers can no longer either overlook their claim or ignore their merit. You may rely upon it; I see something of what goes on behind the scenes of the great State drama, and be assured that a new era is about to dawn on the really able men of this country."

"Your words have given me a degree of encouragement, Mr. Linton, that I was very far from ever expecting to receive. I have often deplored—not on my own account, I pledge my honour—but I have grieved for others, whom I have seen here, unnoticed and undistinguished by successive Governments."

"Well, there is an end of the system now, and it was time!" said Linton, solemnly. "But to come back. Is there no chance of stealing you away, even for a couple of days?"

"Impossible, my dear Mr. Linton. The voluminous mass of evidence yonder relates to an appeal case, in which I am to appear before 'the Lords.' It is a most important suit; and I am at this very moment on my way to London, to attend a consultation with the Solicitor-General."

"How unfortunate!—for *us*, I mean—for, indeed, your client cannot join in the plaint. By the way, your mention of 'the Lords' reminds me of a very curious circumstance. You are aware of the manner in which my friend Cashel succeeded to this great estate here?"

"Yes. I was consulted on a point of law in it, and was present at the two trials."

"Well, a most singular discovery has been made within the last few days. I suppose you remember that the property had been part of a confiscated estate, belonging to an old Irish family, named Corrigan?"

"I remember perfectly—a very fine old man, that used to be well known at Daly's Club, long ago."

"The same. Well, this old gentleman has been always under the impression, that shortly after the accession of George III. the Act of Confiscation was repealed, and a full pardon granted to his ancestors for the part they had taken in the events of the time."

"I never knew the descendants of one of those 'confiscated' families who had not some such hallucination," said Hammond, laughing; "they cling to the straw, like the drowning man."

"Exactly," said Linton. "I quite agree with you. In the present case, however, the support is better than a straw; for there is an actual *bonâ fide* document extant, purporting to be the very pardon in question, signed by the King, and bearing the royal seal."

"Where is this? In whose possession?" said Hammond, eagerly.

Linton did not heed the question, but continued:

"By a very singular coincidence, the discovery is not of so much moment as it might be; because, as Cashel is about to marry the old man's granddaughter—his sole heiress—no change in the destination of the estate would ensue, even supposing Corrigan's title to be all that he ever conceived it. However, Cashel is really anxious on the point: he feels scruples about making settlements and so forth, with the consciousness that he may be actually disposing of what he has no real claim to. He is a sensitive fellow; and yet he dreads, on the other side, the kind of exposure that would ensue in the event of this discovery becoming known. The fact is, his own ancestors were little better than bailiffs on the estate; and the inference from this new-found paper would lead one to say, not over-honest stewards besides."

"But if this document be authentic, Mr. Linton, Cashel's title is not worth sixpence."

"That is exactly what I'm coming to," said Linton, who, the reader may have already perceived, was merely inventing a case regarding a marriage, the better to learn from the counsel the precise position the estate would stand in towards Mary Leicester's husband. "If this document be authentic, Cashel's title is invalid. Now, what would constitute its authenticity?"

"Several circumstances: the registry of the pardon in the State Paper Office—the document itself, bearing the unmistakable evidences of its origin—the signature and seal—in fact, it could not admit of much doubt when submitted to examination."

"I told Cashel so," said Linton. "I said to him, 'My opinion unquestionably is that the pardon is genuine; but,' said I, 'when we have Hammond here, he shall see it, and decide the question.'"

"Ah! that is impossible——"

"So I perceive," broke in Linton; "we then hoped otherwise."

"Why didn't you bring it over with you?"

"So I did," said Linton; "here it is." And, opening a carefully-folded envelope, he placed the important document in the lawyer's hands.

Hammond spread it out upon the table, and sat down to read it over carefully, while Linton, to afford the more time to the scrutiny, took the opportunity of descending to his breakfast.

He stopped as he passed the bar to say a few words to the landlord—one of those easy speeches he knew so well how to make about the "state of trade," "what travellers were passing," and "how the prospect looked for the coming season"—and then, when turning away, as if suddenly recollecting himself, said:

"By the way, Swindon, you are a cautious fellow, that a man may trust with a secret—you know who the gentleman is that came with me?"

"No, Sir; never saw him before. Indeed, I did not remark him closely."

"All the better, Swindon. He does not fancy anything like scrutiny. He is Mr. Roland Cashel."

"Of Tubbermore, Sir?"

"The same. Hush, man—be cautious! He has come up here about a little law business on which he desired to consult Mr. Hammond, and now we have a document for signature, if you could only find us another person equally discreet with yourself to be the witness, for these kind of things, when they get about in the world, are misrepresented in a thousand ways. Do you happen to have any confidential man here would suit us?"

"If my head-waiter, Sir, Mr. Nipkin, would do; he writes an excellent hand, and is a most reserved, cautious young man."

"Perfectly, Swindon; he'll do perfectly. Will you join us upstairs, where my friend is in waiting? Pray, also, give Nipkin a hint not to bestow any undue attention on Mr. Cashel, who wants to be *incog.* so far as may be; as for yourself, Swindon, no hint is necessary."

A graceful bow from the landlord acknowledged the compliment, and he hastened to give the necessary orders, while Linton continued his way to the apartment where the Italian awaited him.

"Impatient for breakfast, I suppose, Giovanni?" said Linton, gaily, as he entered. "Well, sit down, and let us begin. Already I have done more than half the business which brought me here, and we may be on our way back within an hour."

Giovanni seated himself at the table without any of that constraint a sense of inferiority enforces, and began his breakfast in silence.

"You understand," said Linton, "that when you have written the name 'Roland Cashel,' and are asked if that be your act and deed, you have simply to say 'Yes;' a bow—a mere nod, indeed—is sufficient."

"I understand," said he, thoughtfully, as if reflecting over the matter with himself. "I conclude, then," added he, after a pause, "that the sooner I leave the country afterwards, the better—I mean the safer—for me."

"As to any positive danger," said Linton, affecting an easy carelessness, "there is none. The document is merely a copy of one already signed by Mr. Cashel, but which I have mislaid, and I am so ashamed of my negligence I cannot bring myself to confess it."

This tame explanation Linton was unable to finish without faltering, for the Italian's keen and piercing dark eyes seemed to penetrate into him as he was speaking.

"With this I have nothing to do," said he, abruptly. "It is quite clear, however, that Giovanni Santini is not Roland Cashel;

nor, if there be a penalty on what I have done, am I so certain that he whose name I shall have forged will undergo it in my place."

"You talk of forgery and penalties as if we were about to commit a felony," said Linton, laughing. "Pray give me the cream. There is really no such peril in the case, and if there were, it would be all mine."

"I know nothing of your laws here—I desire to know nothing of them," said the Italian, haughtily; "but if it should be my lot to be arraigned, let it be for something more worthy of manhood. I'll sign the paper, but I shall leave the country at once."

No words could have been more grateful to Linton's ears than these. He was, even at that very moment, considering in his own mind in what way to disembarrass himself of his "friend" when this service should have been effected.

"As you please, Giovanni," said he, gravely. "I regret to part company so soon with one whose frankness so well accords with my own humour."

The Italian's lips parted slightly, and a smile of cold and dubious meaning flitted across his dark features.

"We part here, then," said he, rising from the table. "There is a vessel leaves this for Bristol at noon to-day. It is already past eleven o'clock."

"I'll not delay," said Linton, rising and ringing the bell. "Send Mr. Swindon here," said he to the waiter, while he opened a parchment document upon the table, and after hastily glancing over it, folded it carefully again, leaving uppermost the margin, where certain pencil marks indicated the places of signature. "This is yours, Giovanni," said he, placing a weighty purse in the Italian's hand, who took it with all the easy indifference of one whose feelings of shame were not too acute. "Remember what I have——"

There was no time to finish, for already a light tap was heard at the door, and the landlord, followed by the head-waiter, entered.

"We are pressed for time, Swindon," said Linton, as he examined the pens, which, like all hotel ones, seemed invented for ruling music paper, "and have sent for you to witness the signature to this document. Here, Cashel, you are to sign here," said he, turning to Giovanni, who had just lighted a cigar, and was smoking away with all imaginable coolness. The Italian took the pen, and with a bold and steady hand wrote the words "Roland Cashel."

"Mr. Swindon at this side; Mr. Nipkin's name comes underneath."

"You acknowledge this for your hand and seal, Sir?" said Swindon, turning towards Giovanni.

"I do," said the Italian, in an accent which did not betray the slightest emotion, nor any trace of foreign pronunciation.

"All right; thank you, Swindon — thanks, Mr. Nipkin," said Linton, as, with an elation of countenance all his efforts could not suppress, he folded up the parchment; "and now, will you order my horses at once?"

The landlord and the waiter left the room, and Linton found himself once more alone with Giovanni; the only consolation he felt being that it was for the last time. There was a pause, in which each gazed steadily at the other without a word. At last, with a long-drawn sigh, Giovanni exclaimed:

"Perdio! but it is hard to do." And with this he pressed his hat upon his brows, and waving a careless farewell with his hand, walked out, leaving Linton in a state of amazement not altogether unmingled with fear. Tom watched the tall and stalwart figure of the foreigner as he moved through the crowd that filled the quay, and it was with a sense of relief he could not explain to himself that he saw him cross the plank that led to the steamer, on whose deck numerous passengers were already assembled. The bell rang out in warning of her approaching departure, and Linton kept his eyes intently fixed upon the one figure, which towered above the others around him. Already the scene of bustle portended the moment of starting, and some were hastening on board, as others, with not less eagerness, were endeavouring to get on shore; when, just at that instant, the landlord's voice was heard.

"Mr. Hammond is just going off, Sir; he wants to say one word to you before he goes."

Mr. Hammond had just taken his seat in his carriage, and sat with one hand upon the door, awaiting Linton's coming.

"I am run sharp for time, Mr. Linton," cried he, "and have not a second to lose. I wish sincerely I could have given a little more time to that document—not indeed that any feature of difficulty exists in forming an opinion, only that I believe I could have put your friend on the safe road as to his future course."

"You regard it then as authentic—as a good and valid instrument?" said Linton, in a low but eager voice.

"So much so," said Hammond, lowering his tone to a mere whisper, "that if he does not marry the young lady in question, I would not give him twenty shillings for his title."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Linton, leaning his head on the door of the carriage, as if to conceal his chagrin, but in reality to hide the exuberance of his joy; "and this is your candid opinion of the case?"

"I am willing to stake my fame as a lawyer on the issue; for, remember, the whole history of the suit is familiar to me; I recollect well the flaws in the course of proofs adduced, and I see how this discovery reconciles each discrepancy, and supplies every missing link of the chain."

"Poor fellow—it will be a sad blow for him," said Linton, with admirably feigned emotion.

"But it need not, Mr. Linton. The church can tie a knot not even an equity suit can open. Let him marry."

"Ay, if he will."

"Tell him he must; tell him what I now tell you, that this girl is the greatest heiress in the land, and that he is a beggar. Plain speaking, Mr. Linton, but time is short. Good-by."

"One word more. Is the document of such a nature that leaves him no case whatever? Is all the ground cut away beneath his feet?"

"Every inch of it. Once more, good-by. Here is your parchment; keep it safely; there are few men in this city hold in their hands a paper of such moment."

"I'll take good care of it," said Linton, sententiously; "and so good-by, and a safe journey to you. I'll not forget our conversation of this morning. Meek shall hear of it before I sleep to-night. Adieu."

"The richest heiress in the land, and Cashel a beggar," repeated Linton, slowly to himself, as the carriage drove off. "Charley Frobisher would say, 'Hedge on the double event,' but I'll keep my book." And, with this slang reflection, he sauntered into the inn to wait for his horses.

CHAPTER VII.

——His counsel, like his physic,
If hard to take, was good when taken.
VILLAGE WORTHIES.

LONG before the guests of Tubbermore were astir, Cashel sat in his library awaiting the arrival of Dr. Tiernay. In obedience to Roland's request, Mr. Kennyfeck was present, and affected to look over books or out of windows—to scan over prints or inspect maps—anything, in short, which should pass the time and shorten the interval of waiting—doubly awkward from being the first moment he had been alone with Cashel since his arrival. Cashel was silent and absorbed, and, more intent upon following out the train of his own thoughts, never noticed the various arts by which Kennyfeck affected to interest himself. The Solicitor, too, bent from time to time a stealthy look on the young man, on whose features he had rarely seen the same traces of deep reflection.

At last, with a half start, as if suddenly awaking, Cashel sat up in his chair, and said:

"Have I explained to you what Dr. Tiernay's business is here this morning? It is to make a proposition from Mr. Corrigan for the sale of his interest in Tubber-beg. He wishes to leave the country and go abroad."

"His interest, Sir," replied Kennyfeck, calmly, "although more valuable to you than to any one else, must be a matter of small amount; for years back, he has done little more than vegetate on the property, without capital or skill to improve it."

"I'm not asking you to appraise it just yet," said Roland, snappishly; "I was simply informing you of the object of the gentleman's visit. It is the advantage of this purchase that I wished you to consider, not its cost."

"The cost will define the advantage, Sir," rejoined Kennyfeck, "particularly as the demand may be high, and the payment inconvenient."

"How do you mean, inconvenient?"

Kennyfeck hesitated. There was something in the hurried abruptness of the question, as well as in the excited expression of the questioner's face, that confused him; so that Cashel had time to repeat the words before he could reply.

"Is it that I am straitened for money?" said he, passionately.

"Not quite—that—Sir," replied Kennyfeck, stopping between every word. "You have resources—very great resources—untouched, and you have considerable sums in foreign securities, intact——"

"Never mind these," broke in Roland, hurriedly. "How do we stand with those London fellows?"

Kennyfeck shook his head gravely, but without speaking.

"I pray you, Sir," said Roland, in a voice of hardly suppressed passion, "keep pantomime for another moment, or a keener interpreter of it, and condescend, in plain English, to answer me my last question."

"There is no difficulty with Bigger and Swain, Sir," said Kennyfeck, as his cheek grew slightly red. "They will neither be pressing for a settlement, nor exacting when making it; besides, you have not overdrawn very heavily after all."

"Overdrawn, said you?—did you say overdrawn, Mr. Kennyfeck?"

"Yes, Sir. In the account last forwarded, your debit was eleven thousand four hundred and forty pounds; since that you have drawn —but not for any large amount."

"Overdrawn!" repeated Cashel, as though his thoughts had never wandered beyond the first shock of that fact; then rallying into

something like his habitual easy humour, he said, "I am, I need not tell you, the stupidest man of business that ever breathed, so pray forgive me if I ask you once more if I understood you aright that I have not only expended all the money I owned in these people's hands, but actually had contracted a debt to them?"

"That is the case, Sir," said Kennyfeck, gravely.

A deep groan broke from Cashel, and he sat silent and still.

"I would wish to observe, Sir," said Kennyfeck, who was shocked at the alteration a few moments had made in the young man's countenance—"I would wish to observe, Sir, that if you desire a sum of money for any purpose——"

"Stay—let me interrupt you here," said Cashel, laying his hand on Kennyfeck's arm, and using a tone whose earnest distinctness thrilled through his hearer's heart; "I should deceive you, were you to suppose that it is the want of money gives me the pain I am now suffering. That I had believed myself rich a few moments back, and now found myself a beggar, could not give one-thousandth part of that suffering which I feel here. I have braved poverty in every form, and I could brave it again; but I'll tell you what it is that now cuts me to the soul, and lowers me to myself. It is that, in a senseless, heartless career, I should have squandered the wealth by which I once imagined I was to bless and succour hundreds. It is to think, that of all the gold I have wasted, not one memory has been purchased of a sick-bed consoled, a suffering lessened, a sinking spirit encouraged—I have done nothing, actually nothing, save pamper vice and sensual heartlessness. I came to this kingdom a few months back, my very dreams filled with schemes of benevolence. I felt as if this wealth were given to me that I might show the world how much of good may be done by one who, having experienced narrow fortune, should best know how to relieve it in others; and now, here am I, the wealth and the high aspirations alike departed, with no tradition to carry away, save of a life passed in debauch, the friendship of worthless, the pitying contempt of good men! Hear me out. I was nurtured in no school of sentiment; I belonged to a class who had too little time or taste to indulge in scruples. We were reckless, passionate—cruel, if you will—but we were not bad in cold blood; we seldom hated long; we never could turn on a benefactor. These are not the lessons I've lived to learn here! It is over, however—it is past now! I'll go back to the old haunts, and the old comrades. It will go hard with me if I quarrel with their rude speech and rough demeanour. I'll think of *gentlemen!* and be grateful."

The rapid utterance in which he poured forth these words, and the fervid excitement of his manner, abashed Kennyfeck, and deterred him from reply. Cashel was the first to speak.

"This arrangement, however, must be provided for; whatever Mr. Corrigan's interest be worth—or, rather, whatever he will accept in lieu of it—I insist upon his having. But I see Dr. Tiernay coming up to the door; we can talk of these things at another time."

When Tiernay entered the library he was heated with his walk, and his face betrayed unmistakable signs of recent irritation; indeed, he did not long conceal the reason.

"Is it true, Mr. Cashel, that Mr. Linton is your nominee for the borough of Derraheeny?"

"Yes; what of that?"

"Why, that he canvasses the constituency in a fashion we have not yet been accustomed to; at least *your* tenants, of whom I am one, are told that our votes are the condition on which our leases will receive renewal; that you will not brook opposition in any one who holds under you. Are these your sentiments, Mr. Cashel, or only his?"

"Not mine, assuredly," replied Cashel, gravely.

"I said as much. I told several of my neighbours that if this mode of canvass had your sanction, it was from not knowing the privileges of an elector."

"I neither sanctioned nor knew of it," rejoined Cashel, eagerly.

"So much the better—at least for me," said Tiernay, seating himself at the breakfast-table, "for I shall not lose a good breakfast, as I should have been forced to do had these been your intentions."

"I would observe, Doctor Tiernay," interposed Kennyfeck, mildly, "that the borough, being entirely the property of Mr. Cashel, its charities maintained by his bounty, and its schools supported at his cost, he has a fair claim on the gratitude of those who benefit by his benevolence."

"Let him stand himself for the borough, and we'll not deny the debt," said Tiernay, roughly; "but if for every ten he should expend a hundred, ay, Sir, or a thousand, on the village, I'd not vote for Mr. Linton."

"Most certainly, Doctor; I'd never seek to coerce you," said Cashel, smiling.

"Labour lost, Sir. I am your tenant for a holding of twenty-two pounds a year. I have never been in arrear; you, consequently, have not granted me any favour, save that of extending your acquaintance to me. Now, Sir, except that you are a rich man and I a poor one, how is even that condescension on your part a favour? and how could *you* purpose, upon it, to ask me to surrender my right of judgment on an important point, to you, who, from your high station, your rank and influence, have a thousand prerogatives, while *I* have but this one?"

"I never heard the just influence of the landed proprietor disputed before," said Kennyfeck, who felt outraged at the Doctor's hardihood.

"It is only *just* influence, Sir," said Tiernay, "when he who wields it is an example, as much by his life, as by the exercise of an ability that commands respect. Show me a man at the head of a large property extending the happiness of his tenantry, succouring the sick, assisting the needy, spreading the blessings of his own knowledge among those who have neither leisure nor opportunity to acquire it for themselves. Let me see him, while enjoying to the fullest the bounteous gifts that are but the portion of few in this world, not forgetful of those whose life is toil, and whose struggle is for mere existence. Let me not know the landlord only by his liveries and his equipage, his fox-hounds, his plate, his racers, and his sycophants."

"Hard hitting, Doctor!" cried Cashel, interrupting.

"Not if you can take it so good-humouredly," said Tiernay; "not if it only lose me the honour of ever entering here, and teach you to reflect on these things."

"You mistake me much," said Cashel, "if you judge me so narrowly."

"I did not think thus meanly of you; nor, if I did, would it have stopped me. I often promised myself, that if I could but eat of a rich man's salt, I'd tell him my mind, while under the protection of his hospitality. I have paid my debt now; and so, no more of it. Kennyfeck could tell you better than I, if it be not, in part at least, deserved. All this splendour that dazzles our eyes—all this luxury, that makes the contrast of our poverty the colder—all this reckless waste, that is like an unfeeling jest upon our small thrift, is hard to bear when we see it, not the pastime of an idle hour, but the business of a life. You can do far better things than these, and be happier as well as better for doing them! And now, Sir, are you in the mood to discuss my friend's project?"

"Perfectly so, Doctor; you have only to speak your sentiments on the matter before Mr. Kennyfeck; my concurrence is already with you."

"We want you to buy our interest in Tubber-beg," said the Doctor, drawing his chair in front of Kennyfeck; "and though you tell us that flower-plats and hollies, laurustinus and geraniums, are not wealth, we'll insist on your remunerating us for some share of the cost. The spot is a sweet one, and will improve your demesne. Now, what's it worth?"

"There are difficulties which may preclude any arrangement," said Kennyfeck, gravely. "There was a deed of gift of this very property made out, and only awaiting Mr. Cashel's signature."

"To whom?" said Tiernay, gasping with anxiety.

"To Mr. Linton."

"The very thing I feared," said the old man, dropping his head sorrowfully.

"It is easily remedied, I fancy," said Cashel. "It was a hasty promise given to afford him qualification for Parliament. I'll give him something of larger value. I know he'll not stand in our way here."

"How you talk of giving, Sir! You should have been the Good Fairy of a nursery tale, and not a mere man of acres and bank-notes. But have your own way. It's only anticipating the crash a month or so; ruined you must be!"

"Is that so certain," said Cashel, half smiling, half seriously.

"Ask Mr. Kennyfeck, there, whose highest ambition half a year ago was to be your agent, and now he'd scarcely take you for a son-in-law! Don't look so angry, man; what I said is but an illustration. It will be with your property as it was with your pleasure-boat t'other day; you'll never know you've struck till you're sinking."

"You affect to have a very intimate knowledge of Mr. Cashel's affairs, Sir," said Kennyfeck, who was driven beyond all further endurance.

"Somewhat more than you possess, Mr. Kennyfeck; for I know his tenantry. Not as you know them, from answering to their names at rent-day, but from seeing them in seasons of distress and famine,—from hearing their half-uttered hopes that better days were coming when the new landlord himself was about to visit them,—from listening to their sanguine expectations of benefits,—and now, within some few days, from hearing the low mutterings of their discontent—the prelude of worse than that."

"I have seen nothing else than the same scenes for forty years, but I never remember the people more regular in their payments," said the Attorney.

"Well, don't venture among the Drumcoologhan boys alone; that, at least, I would recommend you," said the Doctor, menacingly.

"Why not?—who are they?—where are these fellows?" cried Cashel, for danger was a theme that never failed to stir his heart.

"It's a bad barony, Sir," said Kennyfeck, solemnly.

"A district that has supplied the gallows and the convict-ship for many a year; but we are wandering away from the theme we ought to discuss," interposed Tiernay, "and the question narrows itself to this: if this property is still yours—if you have not already consigned it to another—what is my friend's interest worth?"

"That will require calculation and reflection."

"Neither, Mr. Kennyfeck," broke in Cashel. "Learn Mr. Corrigan's expectations, and see that they are complied with."

"My friend desired a small annuity on the life of his granddaughter."

"Be it an annuity, then," replied Cashel.

"By Heaven!" exclaimed Tiernay, as if he could not restrain the impulse that worked within him, "you are a fine-hearted fellow. Here, Sir," said he, taking a paper from his pocket—"here is a document, which my poor friend sat up half the night to write, but which I'd half made up my mind never to give you. You'd never guess what it is, nor your keen friend either, but I'll spare you the trouble of spelling it over. It's a renunciation of Cornelius Corrigan, Esq., for himself and his heirs for ever, of all right, direct or contingent, to the estate of Tubbermore, once the family property of his ancestors for eleven generations. You never heard of such a claim," said Tiernay, turning to Cashel, "but Mr. Kennyfeck did; he knows well the importance of that piece of paper he affects to treat with such indifference."

"And do you suppose, Sir, that if this claim you speak of be a good and valid one, I could, as a man of honour, maintain a possession to which I had no right? No; let Mr. Corrigan take back that paper; let him try his right, as the laws enable him. If I stand not here as the just owner of this house, I am ready to leave it at this instant; but I am neither to be intimidated by a threat nor conciliated by a compromise."

"Mr. Corrigan's claim has nothing to go upon, I assure you," broke in Kennyfeck. "If we accept the paper, it is by courtesy—to show that we respect the feeling that suggested it—nothing more."

While these words were addressed to Tiernay, Cashel, who had walked towards one of the windows, did not hear them.

"Well," cried Tiernay, after an awkward pause, "the devil a worse negotiator ever accepted a mission than myself! When I desire to be frank, the only truths that occur to me are sure to be offensive, and I never am so certain to insult as when I fancy I'm doing a favour. Good-by, Sir; pardon the liberties of an old man, whose profession has taught him to believe that remedies are seldom painless, and who, although a poor man, would rather any day lose the fee than the patient! You'll not treat Con Corrigan the less kindly because he has an imprudent friend. I'm sorry to think that I leave an unfavourable impression behind me; but I'm glad, heartily glad, I came here to breakfast, for I go away convinced of two things, that I was far from believing so certain when I entered"—he paused for a second or two, and then said—"that a spendthrift could have an unblemished sense of honour, and that an attorney could appreciate it!"

With these words he departed, while Cashel, after staring for a few moments at Kennyfeck, threw himself back in his chair, and laughed long and heartily.

"An original, Sir—quite an original!" said Kennyfeck, who, not exactly knowing whether to accept the Doctor's parting speech as a compliment, or the reverse, contented himself with this very vague expression.

"He's a fine old fellow, although he does lay on his salve in Indian fashion, with a scalping-knife; but I wish he'd not have said anything of that confounded paper."

"Pardon me, Sir," interposed Kennyfeck, taking it from his pocket, "but it might prove of inestimable value, in the event of any future litigation."

"What! you kept it, then?" cried Cashel.

"Of course I did, Sir. It is a document scarce inferior to a deed of title; for, although Mr. Corrigan has nothing to substantiate a claim at law, it is incontestable that his family were the original owners of this estate."

Cashel took the paper from Kennyfeck's hand, and seemed to peruse it for some minutes, and then approaching the fire, he threw it into the blaze, and pressed it down with a poker till it was consumed; while Kennyfeck, too much consternated to utter a word, stood the personification of terror-struck astonishment.

"You have burnt it, Sir!" said he at last, in a whisper.

"Why not, Sir?" cried Cashel, rudely. "Should I have made use of it against the man who wrote it, or against his heirs, if by chance they should seek one day to dispute my right?"

A deep sigh was all the reply Kennyfeck could make.

"I understand your compassion well," said Cashel, scornfully. "You are right, Sir. It was the buccaneer, not the gentleman, spoke there; but I'm sick of masquerading, and I long for a little reality."

Without waiting for a reply, Roland left the room, and wandered out into the park.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Like Dido's self," she said, "I'm free!
Trojan or Tyrian are alike to me."

There was but one species of tyranny Mr. Kennyfeck ever attempted in his family: this was, to shroud with a solemn mystery every little event in his professional career which he saw excited any curiosity with his wife and daughters. It was true that on such occasions he became a mark for most sneering insinuations and derisive commentaries, but he rose with the dignity of a martyr above all their taunts, and doubtless felt in his heart the supporting energy of a high-priest standing watch over the gate of the Temple.

The few pencilled lines by Cashel, which had summoned him to the meeting recorded in the last chapter, he threw into the fire as soon as he had read, and then arising from the breakfast-table, dryly observed,

"Don't wait breakfast, Mrs. Kennyfeck; I shall not be back for some time."

"Another secret, Mr. Kennyfeck," said his wife, scoffingly.

He only smiled in reply.

"It ought to be a duel, at least, Pa," said his eldest daughter, "from the urgent haste of your departure."

"Or a runaway couple, who wish to have the settlements——"

"Is that all you know of the matter, Livy?" said her sister, laughing heartily; "why, child, your Gretna Green folks never have settlements—never think of them till six months later, when they are wanting to separate."

"Is there any occasion for mystery in this case?" rejoined Mrs. Kennyfeck, haughtily.

"To be sure there may, my dear," broke in Aunt Fanny; "there's many a dirty thing the lawyers have to do they'd be ashamed to own before their families."

Even this did not move Mr. Kennyfeck, and although from the way he nestled his chin behind the folds of his white cravat, and a certain scarcely perceptible shake of the head, it was clear he longed to refute the foul aspersion.

"I suppose you will appear at dinner, Sir?" said Mrs. Kennyfeck, with her grandest air.

"I hope so, Mrs. Kennyfeck," was the mild answer.

"Without you should take it into your head, Pa, to enter into rivalry with Mr. Linton, and stay away, Heaven knows where or how long," said Miss Kennyfeck.

Mr. Kennyfeck did not wait for more, but left the room with an air whose solemnity well suited any amount of secrecy.

"Is there a carriage at the door?" said Mrs. Kennyfeck.

"No, Mamma; there are three saddle-horses—one with a side-saddle. That odious Miss Meek!" exclaimed Miss Kennyfeck; "what Lord Charles can see in her I cannot conceive. To be sure, she saves a stable-boy the more, and that to him is something."

"Has your father gone out by the back terrace?" resumed Mrs. Kennyfeck, one only theme occupying her thoughts.

Olivia retired into an adjoining room, and soon returned, saying,

"No, Ma; there's no one there, except Sir Andrew and Lady Janet, taking their morning walk."

"Their run, rather, my dear," chimed in Miss Kennyfeck, "for she chases the poor old man up and down with a cup of camomile tea,

which either scalds or sets him a-coughing. I'm sure that tiresome old couple have awaked me every day the last week with their squabbling."

"Step down into the library, my love," said Mrs. Kennyfeck to her younger daughter, "and bring me up the *Post* or the *St. James's Chronicle*."

"And if you meet Phillis, just ask if he saw your father, for he forgot his gloves." And, suiting the action to the word, Aunt Fanny dived into a cavern of an apron-pocket, and drew out a pair of knitted things without fingers, which she offered to Olivia.

"Do no such thing, Miss Olivia Kennyfeck," said her Mamma, with an air of imposing grandeur.

"Ma wants the newspaper, Olivia, and is not thinking of Papa," said Miss Kennyfeck; and her eyes sparkled with a malicious fun she well knew how to enjoy.

As Miss Olivia Kennyfeck left the room, her sister approached the fireplace, where a small charred portion of the note thrown down by her father was yet lying. She took it, and walking towards the window, examined it carefully.

And while we leave her thus occupied, let us, for the reader's information—albeit he may deem the matter trivial—give the contents as Cashel wrote them:

"Dear Mr. Kennyfeck,—Make my excuses to Mrs. Kennyfeck and the Demoiselles Cary and Olivia, if I deprive them of your society this morning at breakfast, for I shall want your counsel and assistance in the settlement of some difficult affairs. I have been shamefully backward in paying my respectful addresses to the ladies of your family; but to-day, if they will permit, I intend to afford myself that pleasure. It is as a friend, and not as my counsel learned in law, I ask your presence with me in my library at ten o'clock. Till then, "Believe me yours,

"R. C."

Now, of this very common-place document, a few blackened, crumpled, frail fragments were all that remained; and these, even to the searching dark eyes of Miss Kennyfeck, revealed very little. Indeed, had they not been written in Cashel's hand, she would have thrown them away at once, as unworthy of further thought. This fact, and the word "Olivia," which she discovered after much scrutiny, excited all her zeal, and she laboured now like an antiquarian who believes he has gained the clue to some mysterious inscription. She gathered up the two or three filmy black bits of paper which yet lay within the fender, and placing them before her, studied them long and carefully. The word "settlement" was clear as print.

"'Olivia' and 'settlement' in the same paper," thought she; "what can this mean?"

"Come here, Mamma—Aunt Fanny—look at this for a moment," said she, eagerly; and the two ladies approached at her bidding.

"What is that word?" said she to Mrs. Kennyfeck; "is it not 'Olivia?' Don't you see the end of the 'l' has been burned away, but the rest is quite plain?"

"So it is—upon my life!—and in Cashel's hand, too!" exclaimed Mrs. Kennyfeck.

"And what is that?" asked Miss Kennyfeck, triumphantly, pointing to another word.

Aunt Fanny, with her spectacles on, bent down, and examined it long.

"'Battlement.' That is 'battlement' as clear as day," said she.

"What nonsense, Aunt—it is 'settlement.' Look at what you call a 'b'—it is an 's.'"

"Cary's quite right. The word is 'settlement,'" said Mrs. Kennyfeck, in a voice tremulous with joy.

"And there!—I hope you can read!" exclaimed Mrs. Kennyfeck, "even without your spectacles—'paying'—'addresses.'"

"Show it to *me*, Cary," said her mother, eagerly. "I declare I can read it perfectly. Is it possible?—can this be indeed true?"

"Of course it is, Mamma. Will you tell me by what other coincidence you could find Olivia's name coupled with the words 'settlement' and 'addresses' in the same note?"

"It is very suspicious, certainly," said Aunt Fanny.

"I think it very convincing, Aunt—not suspicious," said Miss Kennyfeck, proudly. "Here is something about 'friend,' and another word I can't make out."

"That's something about a 'saw,' my love," said Aunt Fanny.

"How absurd, Aunt; the word is 'law.' I have it. See—here is the name—it is the conclusion of the note, and ran, doubtless, thus: 'Your present friend, and future son-in-law,—R. C.!'"

Mrs. Kennyfeck leaned forward, and kissed her daughter's cheek with a degree of fervour she very rarely gave way to; and then, lying back in her chair, pressed her handkerchief to her face, while she, doubtless, revelled in a little excursion of fancy, not the less brilliant because tempered with anxiety.

If the moment was one of maternal ecstasy for Mrs. Kennyfeck, it was no less one of triumphant joy to her daughter. It was *she* who revealed the secret meaning; her skill and ingenuity had given light to the dark mystery, and consistency to its incoherence. What domination could be too great for such services? It was then, like a legitimate sovereign assuming the reins of government, she said:

"I beg, Aunt Fanny, that you will not spoil the game this time, as most unquestionably you did before."

"Let us see that there is one to be spoiled, my dear," rejoined Aunt Fanny, snappishly.

"You are really too provoking, Fanny," said Mrs. Kennyfeck, removing her handkerchief from two very red eyelids. "You never are satisfied when you see us happy. Cary has shown you enough to convince any one——"

"Any one disposed to conviction, Mamma," broke in Miss Kennyfeck, haughtily. "Hush, here's Olivia."

"Mr. Meek is reading the *Post*, Ma," said the young lady, entering; "and he has got the other papers in his pocket, but he says there's really nothing of any interest in them."

"I think Livy should be told, Mamma," whispered Miss Kennyfeck to her mother.

"I quite agree with you, Cary," said Mrs. Kennyfeck; "I never was a friend to any secrecy in families. Your father, indeed, I grieve to say, does not participate in my sentiments; but much may be excused in him, from the habits of his profession, and, I will also say, from the class in life he sprang from." Here Mrs. Kennyfeck, who had spoken like one delivering an oracle, stopped to drop a tear over the sad *mésalliance* which had condemned her to become the wife of an attorney. "Olivia, my dear, circumstances have disclosed the nature of the interview which Mr. Kennyfeck would not confide to us. It is one in which you are deeply concerned, my dear. Have you any suspicion to what I allude?"

Olivia assumed her very sweetest look of innocence, but made no reply.

"Mamma wants you to be candid enough to say, if there is anything in the way of particular attention you may have received lately, which should corroborate the impressions we entertain."

Miss Kennyfeck delivered these words so categorically, that her sister well knew how, in the event of refusal, a searching cross-examination was reserved for her.

Olivia looked down, and a very slight embarrassment might be detected in the quickened heaving of her chest.

"Tell us, my darling," said Aunt Fanny, "if—if any one has, in a manner so to say—you understand—eh?"

"Keep the blushes, Livy, for another time; they look beautiful with orange flowers in the hair," said her sister; "but be candid with us."

"If you mean attentions, Mamma——"

"We mean attentions, 'and something more,' as Lord Lyndhurst says," interposed Miss Kennyfeck, who felt that she was the proper person to conduct the inquiry.

"I cannot positively say, Mamma, that we are engaged, but I believe that if you and Pa made no obstacles—if, in fact, you are satisfied that his rank and fortune are sufficient for your expectations, as I own they are, for mine——"

"What humility!" exclaimed Miss Kennyfeck, holding up her hands.

"Hush, Cary.—Go on, Livy," said her mother.

"I have no more to say, Mamma. Sir Harvey told me——"

"Sir Harvey!" cried Mrs. Kennyfeck.

"Sir Harvey Upton!" echoed Miss Kennyfeck.

"The man with the hair all over his face!" exclaimed Aunt Fanny, whose western habits had not accustomed her to moustaches.

Olivia stared from one to the other in mingled fear and astonishment. She suddenly saw that she had been betrayed into a confession to which they did not possess the slightest clue; she also perceived that the tidings, for which she anticipated a most joyous welcome, were received with coldness and almost disdain.

"He is a Baronet, Mamma, with very great expectations," said she, proudly; for really, it was a large "bird" to bag, in the beginning of the season, too!

"Very possibly," said Mrs. Kennyfeck, looking to her elder daughter with that silent eloquence which the Court occasionally bestows upon the Crown Counsel, meaning to say: "Have you anything to reply to that?"

"Mamma is aware that Sir Harvey is a Baronet, and a Captain of Hussars, and Jonas Upton of Summerton is his uncle, who may, or may not, leave him his large estates—a circumstance, most probably, mainly dependent on the alliance he may form in marriage."

"Yes, indeed! my dear," broke in Aunt Fanny; "and when the old man finds out that 'tis only an Attorney's daughter——"

"Fanny, do you mean to drive me distracted!" screamed Mrs. Kennyfeck; "are my children to be taught to be ashamed of their father?"

"'Tis a lesson they might know by heart, this time of day, my dear," said the inexorable Fanny, who put up her spectacles, and smoothed down her apron—unmistakable signs that she was preparing for battle.

"You needn't 'beat to quarters,' Aunt, as Captain Luttredge says; there is no one going to fire into you," said Miss Kennyfeck. "The question at present is, how is Olivia to free herself from an unhappy connexion——"

"An unhappy connexion!" exclaimed Livy, in amazement.

"Listen to your sister, and don't interrupt her," said Mrs. Kennyfeck.

"I spoke advisedly, Livy," resumed the elder, "when I called your

connexion with Sir Harvey Upton, unhappy. We have just learned that far higher views are opening to you—that no less a person than Mr. Cashel——"

"Impossible, Mamma! he never notices me in the least. Our acquaintance is scarcely more than a cold act of recognition when we meet."

"Though love is hot sometimes, soon it grows cold," muttered Aunt Fanny, who believed she was quoting to the letter.

"There never was love in the case at all, Aunt," said Olivia.

"Attend to *me*, Livy," said her sister, who seemed impatient at this digression. "It is sufficient—it ought at least to be sufficient—for you, that *we* know Mr. Roland Cashel's intentions. It is for *you* to establish a coolness with Sir Harvey. There is no difficulty in the task. I could not presume to instruct *you* in any matter of this kind nor will I."

"Take a friend's advice, Livy dear, and don't throw out dirty water till you're sure of clean."

"What, Aunt?" asked Olivia, who really was puzzled by the figurative eloquence of her relative.

"Pshaw!" said Miss Kennyfeck, equally angry at the counsel and the vulgarity of the expression it was couched in. "Livy, attend to *me*," said she again. "Mr. Cashel has sent for Papa this morning to make a formal——Hush! here is Pa himself." And Mr. Kennyfeck's heavy tread was heard approaching the door.

Mr. Kennyfeck's sudden entrance not only closed the discussion, but left the debaters in the difficulty of having no concerted line of conduct respecting the new arrival; and although Mrs. Kennyfeck's eyebrows were worked with a telegraphic activity, and Miss Kennyfeck's pantomimic replies as promptly returned, it was clear to see that neither comprehended the other. Kanitz lays it down as an axiom that "when two wings of an army are in presence of an enemy, and without means of rapid and certain communication, it is always better to act on the defensive than to attack, without some evident weak point of the adversary encourages a forward movement." It is more than probable that neither Mrs. Kennyfeck nor her fair daughter had studied the authority in question, yet, with a tact quite instinctive, they proceeded to act upon it.

"You are back early, Mr. Kennyfeck," said his wife, with a tone of half indifference.

Mr. Kennyfeck looked at his watch, and said it wanted twenty minutes to twelve.

"Has Mr. Linton returned, Pa?" asked Miss Kennyfeck.

"I believe not. I have not heard that he has."

"It would be little loss if he never did!" said Aunt Fanny, as she

bit the end of an obstinate thread that would not enter the eye of her needle.

"Oh, Aunt Fanny!" exclaimed Olivia, in a deprecating tone.

"'Pon my word, my dear, them's my sentiments—whatever yours is."

"Mr. Cashel certainly thinks differently," said Miss Kennyfeck, glad to introduce the name uppermost in all their thoughts.

"I think of late there has been something like a coldness between them—you see them very rarely together. Did Mr. Cashel mention his name to you this morning, Mr. Kennyfeck?" said his wife; and by this sudden question revealing that they knew, at least, where he had been.

"Mere passingly, incidentally," said Mr. Kennyfeck, evidently amazed that his small mystery had been penetrated; then, after a slight pause, he added, very probably with a sly malice to pique curiosity, "Mr. Cashel is desirous of Mr. Linton's counsel on a step he meditates taking."

"Indeed, Sir; and has he much confidence in Mr. Linton's judgment?"

"In this instance, it is likely he will follow the dictates of his own, Mrs. Kennyfeck," said the Attorney, solemnly.

This fencing was too much for Mrs. Kennyfeck, in whom the Job-like element was always at zero. It was an insult, too, to her understanding, that Mr. Kennyfeck should skirmish in this fashion with *her;* and so, drawing herself proudly up, she said:

"Mr. Kennyfeck, I would wish to ask you, if you have, even upon one single occasion, discovered that *my* knowledge of the world, *my* tact, or *my* intelligence, were inferior to your own?"

"Never, Madam; I'm sure I never disputed the——"

"No, Sir, you never dared to contest the fact, though you may have endeavoured to escape from its application. I believe, Sir, the only instance of deficient judgment I can be accused of, *you*, at least, ought not to reproach me with. 'My family'"—this was a word Mrs. Kennyfeck used to enunciate with an emphasis that always impressed her husband very little provocation might possibly have made her say, "Our house"—"my family, indeed, may refuse to forgive me"—she stopped, wiped her eyes, and then, with what seemed an heroic victory over her feelings, went on—"but the welfare of my children, Sir, may well be conceived dear to one who would not league to them the unhappy descent she has herself suffered."

Mrs. Kennyfeck paused again. It appeared as though, do what she would, there was no escaping from the theme of her *mésalliance* when once she had touched it. It was very birdlime in its adhesiveness.

"When, therefore, Mr. Kennyfeck, the occasion presents itself of

resuming, through my children—for, alas! it is lost to me in my own person—the station I have forfeited, I do think that I should at least be consulted, that my advice should be asked, and my guidance required. Don't you think so too, Sir?"

Now, of all men living, never was there one more inept to read riddles than poor Mr. Kennyfeck, and while he averred that he perfectly concurred in his wife's opinion, he had not the faintest glimmering of a notion what that opinion implied.

"Don't you think, Sir, also, it would be better to use a little candour with your family?"

"Yes, Pa, we know all about it," said Miss Kennyfeck, nodding significantly.

"Ay, indeed, we had it in black and white—that is, if we can call a bit of burnt——"

"Aunt Fanny, what are you about?" cried Miss Kennyfeck, in a voice of real terror, for she was shocked at the meanness she did not scruple to stoop to.

"Yes, Mr. Kennyfeck," reiterated his wife, "we know all! If, however, you still persist in maintaining that mysterious aspect you have assumed with your family, I must say, Sir, it is perfectly absurd."

"It is unnecessary, too, Papa," cried Miss Kennyfeck.

"And it's unfair to that young creature," chimed in Aunt Fanny, with a gesture towards Olivia, who sat, *en tableau* for injured innocence, next a window.

Possibly, if any could have read Mr. Kennyfeck's sentiments at that instant, they would have recognised the sufferings of a true martyr. To his own heart he muttered,

"This is very hard; it is being called upon to reply to a case without a copy of the affidavits."

At length, with a courage that he did not believe he was capable of, he said:

"I am confused, Mrs. Kennyfeck; I am overwhelmed; I may submit a plea of surprise—that is, I would move the Court, I mean —in fact, I must beg you will permit me to adjourn this case."

And with these words, and in an agitation very unusual with him, he hastened from the room. Scarcely had the door closed after him, than he reopened it, and putting in his head, said,

"I should have told you, Mrs. Kennyfeck, that Mr. Cashel intends to pay a visit here to-day."

And so saying, he shut the door and departed.

"At last, Sir!" exclaimed Mrs. Kennyfeck, in a voice of exultation, "you have been obliged to confess so much at least; but, rely on it, girls, your father is acting under Cashel's dictation, or he never would dare to tamper in this manner with *me*."

CHAPTER IX.

Say what you will, good friend, I do persist,
I had him "covered," when you shook my wrist.

THE DUEL.

In a handsome drawing-room, where the light was judiciously tempered by the slight folds of rose-coloured curtains, while the air breathed the faint delicious perfume of some hot-house flowers, sat Olivia Kennyfeck alone. She was most simply, but becomingly dressed, and in her hair, worn in smooth bands on either cheek, a little sprig of Greek myrtle, with its bright red berries, was interwoven, which served to show to even greater advantage the delicate fairness of a skin tinged with the very faintest blush. There was a soft pensive character in her beauty, which seemed to harmonise perfectly with the silent room and its scattered objects of art. The very exclusion of all view appeared to add to the effect; as though suggesting how much of in-door happiness was contained within those four walls; neither asking for, nor wanting, the "wide cold world" without. She was reading—at least she held a book in her hand—a gorgeously bound little volume it was—nor did the dark ribbon of velvet fringed with gold that marked her place fail to contrast well with the snowy whiteness of the wrist it fell upon.

Her attitude, as she lay, rather than sat, in a deep arm-chair, was faultless in its grace; and, even to the tiny foot which rested on a little Blenheim spaniel, as he lay sleeping on the hearth-rug, had a certain air of homelike ease that made the scene a picture, and to a suggestive mind might have given it a story. And yet, for all the sleepy softness of those half-drooped lids, for all that voluptuous ease of every lineament and limb, the heart within was watchful and waking. Not a sound upon the stairs, not a voice, nor a footstep, that did not make its pulses beat faster and fuller.

Two o'clock struck, and the great bell rang out which called the guests to luncheon, a meal at which Cashel never appeared; and now Olivia listened to the sounds of merry laughter that floated along the corridors, and faded away in the distance, as group after group passed down stairs, and at last, all was silent again. Where was he? Why did he not come? she asked herself again and again. Her mamma and sister had purposely stayed away from luncheon to receive him; for so it was arranged, that she herself should first see Cashel alone, and afterwards be joined by the others—and yet he came not!

The half-hour chimed, and Olivia looked up at the French clock upon the mantelpiece with amazement. Surely there had been more

than thirty minutes since she heard it last; and the little Cupid on the top, who, with full-stretched bow and fixed eye, seemed bent on mischief—silly fool! like herself, there was no mark to shoot at! She sighed; it was not a deep sigh, nor a sad one; nor was it the wearisome expression of listlessness; nor was it the tribute paid to some half-called-up memory. It was none of these; though perhaps each entered into it as an ingredient. But what right have we to analyse its meaning, or ask how much of hope or fear it contained?—what portion of regret for one she was about to desert?—what shame for the faithlessness? Ay, what shame!

Coquetry is no virtue; but most certainly it is not the wholesale corrupter some moralists would make it. Miss Olivia Kennyfeck had been taught it from her earliest years,—from those pleasant days, when, dressed like some fairy queen, she descended from the nursery to stand beside Pa's chair on company days, at dessert, and be stared at, and kissed, and "dear-loved" by some scores of people, whose enthusiasm for childish beauty had all the warmth that springs from turtle and truffles, iced punch and Lafitte. She had been taught it by the French governess, who told her to be "aimable." The very dancing-master cried out, "Grace—more grace, if you please, Miss Olivia," at every step of her minuet; and the riding-master's eternal exhortation was, "Sit as if the whole world was watching you, Miss."

These teachings go further and deeper into the heart than we suspect. "The wish to please"—pure and amiable as the feeling can be—lies on the frontier of a dangerous land—the "wish to conquer." That passion once engendered in the heart, no room remains for any other.

To return to Miss Olivia Kennyfeck—for most ungallantly we are forgetting she is alone all this while. Her education had but one end and object—to obtain a good position by marriage. The precept had been instilled into her mind in a thousand different ways, and not only self-interest, but pride, emulation, and vanity had been enlisted in its support. So constantly was the theme presented to her, such day-by-day discussion of the prizes and blanks drawn by others in the wheel connubial, that she really felt little or no interest in any other topic.

And yet, with all that misdirection of mind, that perverse insistance on wrong, there was still in her heart a void, a want, that neither vanity nor selfishness could fill. It might be, perhaps, to be found out by one who should make it the storehouse of high and generous impulses, of ennobling duties and tender affections; or, just as likely, lie like some fruitful but unknown tract—barren, waste, and profitless!

Three o'clock came! And now the house resounded with the buzz of voices and the hurried movement of feet. Carriages and horses,

too, assembled before the door, and all the pleasant bustle of those bent on pleasure filled the air. Olivia arose, and, screened by the curtain, watched the scene beneath. For the first time she perceived that Lady Kilgoff was in a riding-dress. She stood in the midst of a group before the door, amid which Olivia's eyes peered with restless activity.

No, Cashel was not there! She almost said the comforting words aloud; but at the same instant a cry of "Here he is—here he comes!" broke from those beneath, and every head was turned towards the road to the stables, along which Cashel was seen cantering a snow-white Arab of great beauty. As he came nearer it could be seen that he was seated on a side-saddle, while he managed the well-trained creature with the most graceful address.

"Are you quite certain I may venture, Mr. Cashel?" said Lady Kilgoff, as he pulled up in front of her; "remember, that I am neither so fearless nor so skilful as our fair Queen beside me, who, I must own, is far more worthy of 'Hassan Bey' than I am."

"I'll pledge my life on his good conduct," said Roland, springing from his back; "I've ridden him for an hour, and he is gentleness itself."

"He's over-trained for my fancy," said Miss Meek. "He's like one of the creatures you see in Franconi's, walking up a ladder to catch a handkerchief."

Lady Janet whispered something in her ear, at which she started and smiled, but evidently in ignorance of its meaning.

"What is that very wicked thing that Lady Janet has just told you?" said Lady Kilgoff, as she advanced to mount her horse.

"It was à propos of the handkerchief. She said, 'Probably you were going to throw yours at Mr. Cashel'—I'm sure I don't know why."

Fortunately none but Lady Kilgoff and Cashel heard this speech, but both blushed deeply.

While this was enacting below, Olivia, who marked every gesture and every look eagerly, could not hear what passed. She could only see the respectful attention bestowed by Cashel on every wish of his fair guest; how, having seated her, he draped in graceful folds the long velvet habit, in which, and with a white hat and drooping feather, she resembled one of the court of Louis Quinze.

At last she turned her horse's head, and rode him slowly along before the house, evidently timid and afraid of the high-mettled animal. Cashel, however, walked at his head, and so they stood, while he arranged the curb-chain, exactly beneath the window where Olivia was standing.

She opened the sash noiselessly, and, bending down, listened.

"I assure you," said Lady Kilgoff, "I'll not continue my ride if

you don't come. I have no confidence in these fine gentlemen cavaliers; and as for Miss Meek, she'd risk her life to see me run away with."

"I pledge myself to follow in ten minutes—nay, in five, if possible. I told Mr. Kennyfeck I should make my obeisances to the ladies to-day."

"Would to-morrow not serve?" said she, smiling.

"I believe it might—but, a promise! Besides, I have been sadly deficient in attentions there."

"Sir Harvey and his brother Hussar have made the *amende* for your short-comings; but go, make haste and overtake us. I see 'my Lord' trying to understand Lady Janet, and I must not delay longer."

"Ride slowly," cried Roland, "and don't get run away with till I'm of the party."

She nodded archly in reply to this speech, and joining the group, who were all awaiting her, rode off, while Cashel entered the house, and soon was heard ascending the stairs at a hurried pace.

Olivia could only close the window and resume her place, when a tap was given at the door, and the same instant Cashel entered the room. He stopped suddenly, and looked around, for at first he did not perceive Olivia, who, deep in her book, affected not to hear the noise of his approach.

The rich coronet of brown hair, on which an evening sun was throwing one brilliant gleam, caught his eye, and he advanced near enough to see and be struck by that graceful attitude of which we gave our reader a glimpse at the opening of this chapter.

She was reading some old English ballad; and, as she closed the volume, murmured, half aloud, the lines of the concluding verse:

"And ye varlete, bounde upon a carte,
Was draggede to ye gallows high,
While ye knighte that stole ye ladye's hearte
(And was not his ye gravere parte?)
Rode oute to see him die."

"A sad moral, indeed," said Cashel, in a low, soft voice.

"Oh dear! oh, Mr. Cashel!" cried she, starting, and letting fall the book, "how you have terrified me."

"Pray forgive me," said he, drawing his chair near, "but when I entered the room I saw no one. I had come thus far ere I discovered that I was so fortunate."

"Shall I ring for Mamma and Cary? they are dressing, I know, but will be quite annoyed if you go before they come down."

"You must not inconvenience them on my account," said Roland, eagerly. "I'm certain," added he, smiling, "you are not afraid to receive me alone."

She hung down her head, and partly averting it, murmured a scarcely audible "No."

Cashel, who had evidently never calculated on his careless remark being taken thus seriously, looked silly and uncomfortable for a few seconds. There is a terrible perversity sometimes in our natures; we are disposed to laugh occasionally at times when nothing could be more ill-timed or unsuitable; and so, at moments when we would give anything in the world for some common-place theme to hang phrases on, we cannot, for the life of us, originate one.

"You've not ridden out, I think, since we came?" said Roland, at last, but with an air of sudden despair at his own stupidity.

"No. We have driven out once or twice; but—but——"

"Pray finish," said he, with a persuasive look as he spoke.

"I was going to say that your horses are so spirited, that I was really afraid to trust myself, and the more so as Miss Meek is so wild and so reckless."

"Never think of riding with *her*. Let me be your *chaperon*—shall we say to-morrow? I've got the gentlest creature that was ever mounted."

"Oh, I know her; that sweet white Arab I saw the groom exercising yesterday?"

"No; not she," said Roland, blushing and confused, "a spotted barb, fully as handsome—some say handsomer. Will you do me the favour to ride her to-morrow, and, if she be fortunate enough to please you, to accept her?"

Olivia hung down her head full a second, and a deep scarlet covered her cheek, and rose even to her temples, and it was with a voice broken and interrupted she said, "Oh, I cannot—I must not." Then, turning on him a look, where the tearful eyes, swimming in a softened lustre, conveyed a whole story of deep suffering, she said rapidly: "You are too kind and too good ever to give pain; you are too generous to believe others capable of it; but were I to accept your beautiful gift—were I even to ride out with you *alone*—there is nothing that would not be said of me."

It was Cashel's turn for a slight blush now; and, to do him justice, he felt the sensation a most disagreeable one. It had not indeed occurred to him to make the proposal as the young lady took it, but he was far too long schooled in gallantry to undeceive her, and so he said, "I really cannot see this in the light you do. It is a very natural wish on my part, that I should show my guests whatever my poor grounds afford of the picturesque; and remember, we are not friends of yesterday." This he said in his very kindest tone.

"I *do* remember it," said she, with a slow but most meaning sigh.

"That memory is, I trust, not so associated with sorrow," added

he, leaning down, and speaking in a deep, earnest voice, "that you recal it with a sigh?"

"Oh no; but I was thinking—I must not say of what I was thinking."

"Nay, but you must," said he, gently, and drawing his chair closer.

"I dare not—I cannot—besides, you"—and there was on the pronoun the very softest of all-dwelling intonation—"*you* might be angry—might never forgive me."

"Now I must insist on your telling me," said Roland, passionately, "if but to show how unfairly you judge me."

"Well," said she, drawing a long breath—"but shall I trust you?" There was a most winning archness in the way she said this, that thrilled through Cashel as he listened. "No, I will not," added she, suddenly, and as if carried away by a passionate impulse; "you are too——"

"Too what?" cried he, impatiently.

"Too fickle," said she; and then, as if terrified at her own boldness, she added, in a tremulous voice, "Oh, do forgive me."

"There is really nothing to forgive," said Roland, "unless you persist in keeping from me an avowal that I almost fancy I have a right to ask for. And now, of what were you thinking?"

"I'll tell you," said she, in a low, earnest accent, "though it may lose me your esteem. I was thinking"—her voice here fell so low, that Cashel, to hear her words, was obliged to draw his chair closer, and bend down his head till it actually brushed against the leaves she wore in her hair—"I was thinking that, when we knew you first, before you had made acquaintance with others—when you sat and read to us—when we walked and rode together—when, in short, the day was one bright dream of pleasure to us, who had never known a brother——"

Pardon us, dear reader, if, at so critical a moment, we occupy the pause which here ensued—and there was a pause—by referring to our Aunt Fanny, only premising that we do so advisedly. It was one of that excellent lady's firmest convictions that every one in the world required some discreet friend, who should, at eventful passages in life, be ready to aid, by presence of mind, a wavering resolve, or confirm a half-formed determination. Now, she had waited for two mortal hours on that day for Cashel's coming, in a state of impatience little short of fever. She opened and shut her window, looked up one avenue and down another; she had watched on the landing, and stood sentinel on the stairs; she had seen Mrs. Kennyfeck and her elder daughter pass out into the garden, weary of long waiting; when, at last, she heard Roland's hasty step as he traversed the hall, and, hurrying up-stairs, enter the drawing-room.

Drawn by an attraction there is no explaining, she left her room,

and took up her position in a small boudoir which adjoined the drawing-room. Here she sat, persuading herself she was at her work; but, in reality, in a state of suspense not very inferior to some prisoner while a jury is deliberating on his fate.

The conversation, at first conducted in an ordinary tone, had gradually subsided, till it dropped into the low, undistinguishable manner we have mentioned.

Aunt Fanny's inventive mind had suggested every step of the interview. She kept muttering to herself: "He is explaining himself—she is incredulous—and he tries to reassure her—she believes that his heart was given to another—he vows and swears it was always hers—she cannot credit the happiness—she is too unworthy."

It was just as our Aunt had got thus far in her running commentary that both voices ceased, and a stillness, unbroken by a murmur, succeeded. "What could it mean?" was the sudden question that flashed across her mind; and Napoleon's own dread anxiety, as he gazed on the wood, and hesitated whether the dark masses emerging from the shade were his own legions or the Prussians, was not much more intense than hers. At last—we are sorry to record it—but, alas! Aunt Fanny was only mortal, and an old maid to boot—she approached the door and peeped through the keyhole. The sight which met her eyes needed no second glance; she saw both heads bent down together, the dark waving hair of Cashel close to the nut-brown silky braids of Olivia. Neither spoke. "It was then concluded."

This was the moment in which mutual avowals, meeting like two rivers, form one broad and sweeping flood. It was the moment, too, in which, according to her theory, a friend was all essential. According to her phrase, the "nail should be clinched."

Now, Aunt Fanny had been cruelly handled by the family for all the blunders she had committed. Her skill had been impugned; her shrewdness sneered at; her prognostications derided. Here was an opportunity to refute all at once; and, in the language of the conqueror, "to cover herself with glory."

Gently opening the door she entered the room, and stealing tiptoe over, till she stood behind their chairs, she placed, with all the solemnity of an archbishop, a hand on either head, and, in a voice of touching fervour, said:

"Bless ye both, my darlings; may ye be as happy as——"

As what? The history is unable to record; for a shrill cry from her niece, and an exclamation nearly as loud, and we fear far less polite, from Roland, cut short the speech.

Shriek followed shriek from Olivia, who, partly from the shock, and still more from shame, was thrown into an attack of hysterics.

"What the——" he was very nigh saying something else—"what

ACE OF CANA

have you done, Madam?" said Roland, in a state of mingled anger and terror.

"It's only your Aunt Fanny. It's me, my pet. Livy, darling, don't be frightened; and here, too, is Mr. Cashel."

In this, however, the good lady was mistaken; for Roland had hastened up-stairs to Mrs. Kennyfeck's room, which finding locked, he flew down to the great drawing-room, thence to the library, and was making for the garden, when he saw that lady and her daughter crossing the hall.

"I'm afraid, Madam," said he, with all the composure he could summon, "Miss Olivia Kennyfeck is not well; nothing serious, I trust; but a sudden fright—a shock—Miss O'Hara somewhat imprudently——"

"Oh, Fanny again!" screamed Mrs. Kennyfeck; and without waiting for more, rushed up-stairs, followed by her daughter, while Roland, in a state of mind we dare not dwell upon, hastened from the house, and mounting his horse, galloped off into the wood.

There were times when Cashel would have laughed, and laughed heartily, at the absurdity of this adventure. He would have even treasured up the "tableau" as a thing for future ridicule among his friends; but his better feelings, born of a more manly pride, rejected this now; he was sorry, deeply, sincerely sorry, that one, with so much to fascinate and charm about her, could lend herself to a mere game like this! "Where are these deceptions to end?" said he, in passionate warmth. "Have candour, good faith, and honesty fled the world? or, are they only to be found among those whose vices make the foil to such humble virtues?"

Nor were these his only painful reflections. He was obliged to see himself—the thing, of all others, he despised—"a Dupe." The mark for every mean artifice and every ignoble scheme. The gambler—the flirt—the adventurer in every walk—regarded him as a prey. Wealth had done this for him—and it had done no more! None cared for him as a friend or companion. Even as a lover, his addresses were heralded by his gold, not enhanced by qualities of his own. What humiliation!

Mary Leicester alone seemed unimpressed by his great fortune, and regardless of his wealth. She alone had never evinced towards him any show of preference above others less endowed by Fate. Nay, he fancied he could trace something of reserve in her manner whenever he stepped by chance out of his character of careless, buoyant youth, and dwelt upon the plans that mere money accomplishes. In these she showed no interest, and took no pleasure; while, to the adventures of his former life, she listened with eager attention. It was easy to see she thought more of the *Caballero* than the *Millionnaire*.

What a happiness had it been to have befriended her grandfather

and herself; how different had been his reflections at this hour; what lessons in the true wisdom of life might he not have learned from one who had seen the world, not as the play-table for the rolling dice of fortune, but as the battle-ground where good and evil strive for victory; where a higher philosophy is taught than the lifeless, soulless dictates of mere fashionable existence!

CHAPTER X.

> But where are they alle, I do not see,
> One half of our goodlie companie?
>
> HONE.

THAT day was destined to be one of contrarieties to the household of Tubbermore. Of the Kennyfeck family, none appeared at dinner. Lady Kilgoff, angry at Roland's breach of engagement—for, although he rode at top-speed in every direction, he never overtook her—also kept her room. The carriage sent for Miss Leicester had returned without her, a somewhat formal note of apology stating that Mr. Corrigan was indisposed, and his granddaughter unwilling to leave him; while Linton, usually a main feature in all the social success of a dinner, was still absent.

Of the assembled guests, too, few were in their wonted spirits. Sir Andrew and Lady Janet had quarrelled in the morning about the mode of preparing dandelion tea, and kept up the dispute all the day. Upton was sulky, dark, and reserved. Meek more than usually lachrymose. Frobisher's best mare had been staked in taking a leap, and Miss Meek had never discovered it till half an hour after, so that the lameness was greatly aggravated. Mrs. White had had a "tiff" with the author, for his not believing the Irish to be of Phœnician origin, and wouldn't speak to him at dinner; so that Cashel himself, constrained, absent, and ill at ease, found his company anything rather than a relief to his own distracted thoughts.

Among his other guests he found the same reserve and coldness of manner, so that no sooner had they assembled in the drawing-room, after dinner, than he left the house and set off to inquire for Mr. Corrigan at the cottage.

"We had nine vacant places to-day at table," said Lady Janet, as soon as she had arranged her special table next the fire, with a shade in front and a screen behind her, and was quite satisfied that, in regard to cushions and footstools, she had monopolised the most comfortable in the room.

"I thought—aw—that we—aw—were somewhat slow," said Captain Jennings, with his habitually tiresome, pompous intonation.

A little bit of scandal

"What's the matter with Upton?" said a junior officer of his regiment, in a whisper; "he looks so confoundedly put out."

"I'm sure I don't know," yawned out Lord Charles; "he has a very safe book on the Oaks."

"He's backing Dido at very long odds," interposed Miss Meek, "and she's weak before, they say."

"Not staked, I hope," said Frobisher, looking maliciously at her.

"I don't care what you say, Charley," rejoined she; "I defy any one to know whether a horse goes tender, while galloping in deep ground. You are always unjust." And she moved away in anger.

"She *is* so careless," said Frobisher, listlessly.

"Tell me about these Kennyfecks. What is it all about?" said Mrs. White, bustling up, as if she was resolved on a long confidence.

"They hedged against themselves, I hear," said Frobisher.

"Indeed! poor things; and are they much hurt?"

"Not seriously, I fancy," drawled he. "Lady Janet knows it all."

Mrs. White did not neglect the suggestion, but at once repaired to that part of the room where Lady Janet was sitting, surrounded by a select circle, eagerly discussing the very question she had asked to be informed upon.

"I had it from Verthinia," said Mrs. Malone, with her peculiar, thick enunciation, "Lady Kilgoff's maid. She said that not a day passes without some such scene between the mother and daughters. Mrs. Kennyfeck had, it seems, forbithen Cashel to call there in her abthence."

"I must most respectfully interrupt you, Madam," said a large old lady, with blonde false hair, and a great deal of rouge, "but the affair was quite different. Miss Olivia, that is the second girl, was detected by her aunt, Miss O'Hara, packing up for an elopement."

"Fudge," said Lady Janet; "she'd have helped her, if that were the case! I believe the true version of the matter is yet to come out. My woman, Stubbs, saw the apothecary coming down stairs, after bleeding Livy, and called him into her room; not, indeed, to speak of this matter"—here Lady Janet caused her voice to be heard by Sir Andrew, who sat, in moody sulk, right opposite—"it was to ask, if there should not be two pods of capsicum in every pint of dandelion tea."

"There may be twa horns o' the de'il in it," ejaculated Sir Andrew, "but I'll na pit it to my mouth agen. I hae a throat like the fiery furnace that roasted the three chaps in the Bible."

"It suits your tongue all the better," muttered Lady Janet, and turned round to the others. "Stubbs, as I was saying, called the man in, and after some conversation about the dandelion, asked, in a cursory way, you know, "How the lady was, up-stairs?" He shook his head, and said nothing.

"'It will not be tedious, I hope?' said Stubbs.

"'These are most uncertain cases,' said he; 'sometimes they last a day, sometimes eight or nine.'

"'I think you're very mysterious, doctor,' said Stubbs.

"He muttered something about honour, and, seizing his hat, went off, as Stubbs says, 'as if he was shot!'"

"Honour!" cried one of the hearers.

"Honour!" ejaculated another, with an expression of pure horror.

"Didn't he say, Madam," said the blonde old lady, "that it wasn't his branch of the profession?"

"Oh! oh!" broke in the company together, while the younger ladies held up their fans and giggled behind them.

"I'm thorry for the poor mother!" sighed Mrs. Malone, who had seven daughters, each uglier than the other.

"I pity the elder girl," said Lady Janet; "she had a far better tone about her than the rest."

"And that dear, kind, old creature, the aunt. It is said that but for her care this would have happened long ago," said Mrs. Malone.

"She was, to my thinking, the best of them," echoed the blonde lady; "so discreet, so quiet, and so unobtrusive."

"What could come of their pretension?" said a colonel's widow, with a very large nose and a very small pension; "they attempted a style of living quite unsuited to them! The house always full of young men, too."

"You wouldn't have had them invite old ones, Madam," said Lady Janet, with the air of rebuke the wife of a commander-in-chief can assume to the colonel's relict.

"It's a very sad affair, indeed," summed up Mrs. White, who, if she hadn't quarrelled with Mr. Howle, would have given him the whole narrative for the "Satanist."

"What a house to be sure! There's Lady Kilgoff on one side——"

"What of her, my Lady?" said the blonde.

"You didn't hear of Lord Kilgoff overtaking her to-day in the wood with Sir Harvey Upton?—hush! or he'll hear us. The poor old man—you know his state of mind—snatched the whip from the coachman, and struck Sir Harvey across the face. They say there's a great welt over the cheek!"

Mrs. White immediately arose, and, under pretence of looking for a book, made a circuit of the room in that part where Sir Harvey Upton was lounging, with his head on his hand.

"Quite true," said she, returning to the party. "It is so painful, he can't keep his hand from the spot."

"Has any one discovered who the strange-looking man was that was received by Mr. Cashel this morning in his own study?" asked

the blonde. "My maid said he was for all the world like a sheriff's officer. It seems, too, he was very violent in his language; and but for Mr. Kennyfeck, he would not have left the house."

"Too true, I fear, Ma'am," said Mrs. Malone; "my husband, the Thief"—this was Mrs. Malone's mode of abbreviating and pronouncing the words Chief Justice—"told me it was impothible for Mr. Cashel to continue his extravaganth much longer."

"It's shameful—it's disgraceful," said Lady Janet; "the kitchen is a scene of waste and recklessness, such as no fortune could stand."

"Indeed, so the 'Thief' said," resumed Mrs. Malone; "he said that robbery went on, on every thide, and that Mr. Phillith, I think his name is, was the worst of all."

"Your husband was quite correct, Ma'am," said Lady Janet; "no one should know it better." And then she whispered in her neighbour's ear, "If the adage be true, 'Set a Thief to catch a Thief.'"

The party entrusted with this could not restrain her laughter, and for a space, a species of distrust seemed to pervade the circle.

We are certain that no apology will be required, if we ask of our reader to quit this amiable society—although seated at a comfortable fire, in the very easiest of chairs, with the softest carpet beneath his feet—and accompany Roland Cashel, who now, with hasty step, trod the little path that led to Tubber-beg Cottage.

However inhospitable the confession, we are bound to acknowledge Cashel was growing marvellously weary of his character as a host. The hundred little contrarieties which daily arose, and which he knew not how to smooth down or conciliate, made him appear, in his own estimation at least, deficient in worldly tact, and left him open to the belief that others would judge him even less mercifully. The unbridled freedom of his household, besides, stimulated all the selfishness of those who, in a better arranged establishment, had kept "watch and ward" over their egotism; and thus, instead of presenting the features of a society where the elements of agreeability were not deficient, they resembled rather the company in a packet-ship, each bent upon securing his own comfort, and only intent how to make his neighbour subsidiary to himself.

Prosperity, too, was teaching him one of its least gracious lessons —"Distrust." The mean and selfish natures by which he was surrounded were gradually unfolding themselves to his view, and he was ever on the verge of that dangerous frontier where scepticism holds sway. One conclusion—and it was not the least wise—he formed was, that he was ill suited to such companionship, and that he had been happier, far happier, on some humble fortune, than as the rich proprietor of a great estate.

It was, while thus ruminating, Cashel found himself at the little space which intervened between one front of the cottage and the

lake, and was struck by the rapid movement of lights that glanced from window to window, appearing and disappearing at every instant.

The dread that the old man was taken seriously ill at once came over him, and he hastened forward in eager anxiety to learn the tidings. Then, suddenly checking himself, he felt reluctant, almost stranger that he was, to obtrude at such a moment. Fearing to advance, and unwilling to retire, he stood uncertain and hesitating.

As he remained thus, the door of the drawing-room that opened upon the lawn was flung wide, and Tiernay passed hastily out, saying in a loud and excited voice, "I will have my own way. I'll see Cashel at once." And with these words he issued forth in haste. Scarcely, however, had he gone a dozen paces, than he stopped short, and, clasping his hands firmly together, muttered aloud, "To what end should I seek him? What claim can I pretend—by what right appeal to him?"

"Every claim and every right," cried Roland, advancing towards him, "if I can only be of any service to you."

"What! actually here at this moment!" exclaimed Tiernay. "Come this way with me, Sir; we must not go into the house just yet." And so saying, he passed his arm within Roland's, and led him onward towards the lake.

"Is he ill?" said Cashel—"is Mr. Corrigan taken ill?" But although the question was asked eagerly, Tiernay was too deeply sunk in his own thoughts to hear it; while he continued to mutter hurriedly to himself.

"What *is* the matter?" said Roland, at last, losing patience at a preoccupation that could not be broken in upon. "Is Mr. Corrigan ill?"

"He is ruined!" said Tiernay, dropping Cashel's arm, and letting fall his own as he spoke, with a gesture of despair.

"What do you mean?—How?"

"Ruined! utterly ruined!" re-echoed Tiernay; and there was that in his accent and the emotion of his manner that forbade any further questioning.

"It is not at a moment like this," said the Doctor, "that I can tell you a long tale, where treachery and falsehood on one side, and generosity and manliness on the other, played the game as ever it has been, and ever will be played, between such antagonists;—enough, if I say my poor friend became responsible for the debts of a man who, but for his aid, would have had a felon's fate. This fellow, who possesses one terrible means of vengeance, threatens now to use it, if a demand be not complied with, which Corrigan may leave himself a beggar and yet not satisfy. The threat has been held over him for years, and for years he has struggled on, parting, one by one, with every little requirement of his station, and submitting with

noble resignation to any and everything to stave off the evil day; but it has come at last."

"And what is the sum demanded?" said Cashel, hastily.

"I cannot tell. There are various bills; some have been renewed again and again, others are yet current. It is a tangled web, and, in our hopelessness, we never sought to unravel it."

"But the danger is imminent?"

"So imminent, that my friend will be arrested to-morrow if bail be not forthcoming. I have not told him this; I dare not tell him so; but I have made up a story to induce him to leave this to-night."

"Where for?" cried Roland, anxiously.

"God knows! I lose memory as well as judgment in moments like this. I believe I advised Limerick, and thence by ship to some port in England, from which they could reach the Continent."

"But all this will be unnecessary if I offer myself as security," said Roland.

"For a sum of which you know nothing!" muttered Tiernay, sorrowfully.

"No matter; it cannot be, in all likelihood, more than I can meet."

"And for one who can never repay!" echoed the Doctor, still more sadly.

"Who can tell that?" said Cashel; "there's many a coinage costlier than ever the Mint fashioned; he may requite me thus."

The Doctor started. "You mean—no!—no!" cried he, interrupting himself, "that were too great good fortune. I must tell you, Sir," added he, in a firm voice, "that there is nothing—absolutely nothing—to give you in requital for such aid. My friend's alternative is a prison, or be your debtor for what he cannot pay."

"I am content—perfectly content," said Roland. "There is no need to say another word on the matter. Do not suffer him to endure any anxiety we can spare him; tell him at once the thing is done."

"We must think over this a little," said Tiernay, musing. "Con is a difficult fellow to deal with; there must be something which shall give it the semblance of a loan; he must be made to believe it is only a change of creditors."

"Could we not arrange it without his knowledge, while you could affect to have made some settlement which has satisfied the others?"

"Too late—too late, for that; he has seen Hoare himself."

"Hoare!—the money-lender from Dublin?" said Cashel, blushing at the recollection of his own acquaintance with him.

"Ay, Sir, of course you know him! A man cannot enjoy such distinguished friendships as you have, without the aid of usurers!"

Cashel smiled good humouredly, and went on:

"Where is this gentleman at present?"

"Yonder," said Tiernay, pointing to the cottage; "but he intends shortly returning to the inn at the village, where perhaps it would be better to meet him than here. If you'll permit me, I'll just step in and say as much, and then we can stroll that way together."

Cashel consented, and his companion left him to do his errand. It was only as he stood alone, and had time for reflection, that he remembered his conversation with Kennyfeck in the morning, and learned that, with regard to ready money at least, he stood in a very different position from what he supposed. That there would be difficulties and legal obstacles innumerable made by Kennyfeck to any sale of property, he well knew; but he had made up his mind as to his course, and would not be thwarted. He had but space for these reflections, when Tiernay joined him, saying,

"So far all is well. Hoare will follow us in a few minutes, and, for privacy's sake, I have made the rendezvous at my house."

"And Corrigan—how have you left him?" asked Cashel.

"Like one in a dream. He seems neither to know whether it be misfortune or the opposite which impends him. Were it not for Mary, his poor heart had given way long since. Ay, Sir, there is more true heroism in one day of that humble life, than in the boldest deed of bravery even you have ever witnessed."

Cashel did not speak, but, in the pressure of his arm against Tiernay's, the other felt how the theme had touched him.

"You only know her by the graceful elegance of her manner, and the fascinations that, even to old men like myself, are a kind of sorcery; but I have seen her in every trial, where temper and mind, and heart and pride, are tested, and come through all victorious; draining the very wells of her own hopefulness to feed the exhausted fountain which age and disappointment had dried up; lending to manhood a courage greater than her own; ay, and more—showing that her temper could resist the jarring influences of misfortune, and, like the bright moon above the storm-lashed clouds, soar on, glorious and lustrous ever. What are men made of?" cried he, energetically; "of what stuff are they formed, when such a girl as this can excite more admiration for her beauty, than for traits of character that ennoble humanity?"

"You speak with all a lover's warmth, Doctor," said Cashel, half smiling, while, in reality, the subject interested him deeply.

"And why not, Sir? I do love her, and with an affection that only such beings inspire. It is creatures like her that redeem years of disappointment and worldly disgust. It is in watching the single-heartedness of that young girl that I, an old man, hackneyed and hardened as I am, become trustful and hopeful of others. Love her! —to be sure I love her. And so would you, if the poor fopperies amid which you live but left you one moment free to think and feel as your

own head and heart would lead you. I hope you take no heed of my rude speech, Sir," said he, hastily; "but it is the fault of my craft to believe that sweet things are only 'Placebos,' given but to earn the fee and amuse the patient."

"I thank you for it," said Cashel, pressing his hand; "few have ever cared to tell me truths."

"Say, rather, few have cared to resign their influence over you by showing they knew your weak points. Now, I have too deep an interest in *you*, and too slight a regard for any profit your acquaintance can render myself, to be swayed by this. You don't know—you cannot know—what a charm there is to an old fellow like myself, whose humble fortunes limit to a life of mere routine—to think that he has an opportunity of counselling one in your station—to feel that he has sown the seed of some good principle, that one day or other will bear its fruit. Yes, years hence, when you have forgotten the old village doctor—or if by chance remember him, only to recal his vulgarity or eccentricity—I will be an anxious watcher over you, flattering myself to think that I have had some share in instilling the precepts by which you are winning good men's esteem. These thoughts are poor men's treasures, but he that feels them would not barter them for gold."

"I have long wished for such a counsellor," said Cashel, fervently.

"The advice will not be the less stringent that it comes when you are heart-sick of frivolity," said Tiernay. "What could your fine company up yonder teach you? Such of them as are above mere folly, trade in vice. I have seen them all since they have assembled here, and I am no mean physiognomist, and there is but one among them deserving of better than the poor heartless life they're leading."

"I can guess whom you mean," said Roland, half pleased and half fearful.

"Well, she indeed would merit a better lot; and yet I would she were gone."

"Why so? Do you grudge us even a passing 'gleam of virtue's brightness?' "

"She is more dangerous than the veriest coquette that ever lured a man to ruin. It is in such as she, where noble qualities have run to waste, where generous sentiments and pure affections have been blighted by the cold chill of a world that fosters not such gifts, the peril is ever greatest; for her sake and for yours, I would she were gone."

As they spoke thus, they had reached the wide esplanade in front of the great house, from the windows of which lights were gleaming, while sounds of festivity and pleasure floated on the night air.

Tiernay halted for a second, and then said, "Who could believe that the owner of that princely mansion, filled as it is with pleasure-

loving guests, and every adjunct that can promote enjoyment, should leave it, to wander on foot with a poor old village doctor, whose only merit is to utter unpalatable truths!"

"And be happier while doing so! add that, my worthy friend," said Cashel, pressing the arm that he held within his own.

"Come along, Sir; this dalliance is pleasanter to me than to you. I begin to feel that I may have done you good, and you should be a doctor to know the full ecstasy of that feeling. Let us now move on, or this man will be before us." And so saying, they moved briskly forward towards the village of Dunkeeran.

CHAPTER XI.

The debts we make by plighted vows,
Bear heaviest interest, ever!

HAYWOOD.

THE Doctor's little parlour was the very "ideal" of snugness; there was nothing which had the faintest resemblance to luxury save the deep-cushioned arm-chair, into which he pressed Cashel at entering, but there were a hundred objects that told of home. The bookshelves, no mean indication of the owner's "trempe," were filled with a mixture of works on medicine, the older English dramatists, and that class of writers who prevailed in the days of Steele and Addison. There was a microscope on one table, with a great bunch of fresh-plucked fern beside it. A chess-board, with an unfinished game—a problem from a newspaper, for he had no antagonist—stood on another table; while full in front of the fire, with an air that betokened no mean self-importance, sat a large black cat, with a red leather collar, the very genius of domesticity. As Cashel's eyes took a hasty survey of the room, they rested on a picture—it was the only one there—which hung over the mantelpiece. It was a portrait of Mary Leicester, and although a mere water-colour sketch, an excellent likeness, and most characteristic in air and attitude.

"Ay!" said Tiernay, who caught the direction of his glance, "a birthday present to me! She had promised to dine with me, but the day, like most Irish days, when one prays for sunshine, rained torrents; and so she sent me that sketch, with a note, a merry bit of doggrel verse, whose merit lies in its local allusions to a hundred little things, and people only known to ourselves; but for this, I'd be guilty of breach of faith and show it to you."

"Is the drawing, too, by her own hand?"

"Yes; she is a clever artist, and might, it is said by competent

judges, have attained high excellence as a painter, had she pursued the study. I remember an illustration of the fact worth mentioning. Carringford, the well-known miniature-painter, who was making a tour of this country a couple of years back, passed some days at the cottage, and made a picture of old Con Corrigan, for which, I may remark passingly, poor Mary paid all her little pocket-money, some twenty guineas, saved up from Heaven knows how long. Con did not know this of course, and believed the portrait was a compliment to his granddaughter. Carringford's ability is well known, and there is no need to say the picture was admirably painted; but still it wanted character; it had not the playful ease, the gentle, indulgent pleasantry that marks my old friend's features; in fact, it was hard and cold, not warm, generous, and genial; so I thought, and so Mary thought, and accordingly, scarcely had the artist taken his leave, when she set to work herself, and made a portrait, which, if inferior as a work of art, was infinitely superior as a likeness. It was Con himself; it had the very sparkle of his mild blue eye, the mingled glance of drollery and softness, the slightly curled mouth, as though some quaint conceit was lingering on the lip! all his own. Mary's picture hung on one side of the chimney, and Carringford's at the other, and so they stood when the painter came through, from Limerick, and passed one night at Tubber-beg, on his way to Dublin. I breakfasted there that morning, and I remember, on entering the room, I was surprised to see the frame of Carringford's portrait empty, and a bank-note, carefully folded, stuck in the corner. 'What does that mean?' said I to him, for we were alone at the time."

"'It means simply that *my* picture cannot stand such competitorship as *that*,' said he; '*mine* was a miniature, *that* is the man himself.' I will not say one-half of the flatteries he uttered, but I have heard from others since, that he speaks of this picture as a production of high merit. Dear girl! that meagre sketch may soon have a sadder interest connected with it; it may be all that I shall possess of her! Yes, Mr. Cashel, your generosity may stave off the pressure of one peril, but there is another, from which nothing but flight will rescue my poor friend."

A sharp knocking at the door here interrupted the Doctor's recital, and soon Hoare's voice was heard without, inquiring if Dr. Tiernay was at home?

Hoare's easy familiarity, as he entered, seemed to suffer a slight shock on observing Roland Cashel, who received him with cold politeness.

Tiernay, who saw at once that business alone would relieve the awkwardness of the scene, briefly informed the other that Mr. Cashel was there to learn the exact amount and circumstances of Corrigan's liabilities, with a view to a final settlement of them.

"Very pleasing intelligence this, Doctor," said the money-lender, rubbing his hands, "and, I am free to own, very surprising also! Am I to enter into an explanation of the peculiar causes of these liabilities, Doctor, or to suppose," said he, "that Mr. Cashel is already conversant with them?"

"You are to suppose, Sir," interposed Cashel, "that Mr. Cashel is aware of every circumstance upon which he does not ask you for further information." There was a sternness in the way he spoke that abashed the other, who, opening a huge pocket-book on the table, proceeded to scan its contents with diligence; while Tiernay, whose agitation was great, sat watching him without speaking.

"The transactions," said Hoare, "date from some years back, as these bills will show, and consist, for the most part, in drafts, at various dates, by Mr. Leicester, of South Bank, New Orleans, on Cornelius Corrigan, Esq., of Tubbermore. Some of these have been duly honoured; indeed, at first, Mr. Corrigan was punctuality itself; but bad seasons, distress at home here, greater demands, the consequence of some commercial losses sustained by Mr. Leicester in the States, all coming together, the bills were not met as usual; renewals were given—and, when it comes to that, Mr. Cashel, I need scarcely say difficulties travel by special train." No one joined in the little laugh by which Mr. Hoare welcomed his own attempt at pleasantry, and he went on: "At first we managed tolerably well. Mr. Corrigan devoted a portion of his income to liquidate these claims; he made certain sales of property; he reduced his establishment; in fact, I believe, he really made every sacrifice consistent with his position——"

"No, Sir," broke in Tiernay, "but consistent with bare subsistence."

The violent tone of the interruption startled the money-lender, who hastened to concur with the sentiment, while he faltered out—

"Remember, gentlemen, I speak only from hearsay; of myself I know nothing."

"Go on with your statement, Sir," said Cashel, peremptorily.

"My statement," said Hoare, provoked at the tone assumed towards him, "resolves itself into a debt of three thousand seven hundred and forty-eight pounds some odd shillings. There are the bills. The sums due for interest and commission are noted down, and will, I believe, be found duly correct."

"Three thousand seven hundred pounds in less than five years!" ejaculated Tiernay. "What iniquity!"

"If your expression is intended to apply to anything in the conduct of this transaction, Sir," said Hoare, growing pale with passion as he spoke, "I beg you to remember that there is such a thing in the land as redress for libel."

"If the laws will warrant sixty per cent., they may well punish

the man who calls it infamy," said Tiernay, almost choking with anger.

"That will do, gentlemen, that will do," said Hoare, replacing the bills in the pocket-book, while his fingers trembled with passion. "I was not aware that your object in this meeting was to insult me. I'll not expose myself a second time to such a casualty. I'll thank you to hand me that bill, Sir?" This request was addressed to Cashel, who, with his eyes riveted on a document which he held in both hands, sat perfectly unmindful of all around him.

"If you will have the kindness to give me that bill, Sir?" said Hoare, again.

"Shylock wants his bond," said Tiernay, who walked up and down the room with clenched hands, and brows knitted into one deep furrow.

Hoare turned a scowling glance towards him, but not trusting himself to reply, merely repeated his question to Cashel.

"How came you by this?" cried Roland, rising from the table, and holding out a written paper towards Hoare—"I ask, Sir, how came you by this?" reiterated he, while the paper shook with the hand that held it.

"Oh! I perceive," said Hoare; "that document has no concern with the case before us; it refers to another and very different transaction."

"This is no answer to my question, Sir," said Cashel, sternly; "I asked, and I ask you again, how it came into your hands?"

"Don't you think, Sir, that it would be more appropriate to express your regret at having examined a paper not intended to have been submitted to you?" said Hoare, in a tone half insolent, half deferential.

"I saw my name upon it," said Cashel; "coupled, too, with that of another, of whom I preserve too many memories to treat anything lightly wherein he bears a part; besides, there can be but little indiscretion in reading that to which I had attached my own signature. And now, once more, Sir, how do I see it in your possession?"

"Really, Mr. Cashel, when the question is put in this tone and manner, I am much disposed to refuse an answer. I can see nothing in our relative situations that can warrant the assumption of these airs towards *me*."

"Shylock, again!" exclaimed Tiernay, who continued to pace the room during this scene with hasty strides.

"Not so, Sir," said Cashel, as Hoare moved towards the door, against which, Roland now placing a chair, sat down. "Out of this room you shall not stir, till I hear a distinct and clear account of the circumstances by which I find you in possession of this paper."

"You have no right, Sir, to demand such an answer."

"Possibly not, legally speaking," said Cashel, whose voice became calmer and deeper as his passion increased. "You are more conversant with law than I am, and so I take it that your opinion is correct. But I have the right which a good conscience and strong will beget, and I tell you again, you'll not leave this room before you satisfy me, or you'll not leave it living."

"I call you to witness, Dr. Tiernay," said Hoare, whose accents trembled with fear and anger together, "that this is a case of false imprisonment—that a threat against my life has been uttered, if I do not surrender the possession of certain papers."

"Nothing of the kind," broke in Tiernay; "there is no thought of taking anything from you by force. Mr. Roland Cashel—doubtless for good reasons of his own—has asked you a question, which you, demurring to answer, he tells you that you shall not leave the room till you do."

"And do you fancy, Sir, that such conduct is legal?" cried Hoare.

"I cannot say," rejoined Tiernay; "but that it is far more mild and merciful than I could have expected under the circumstances, I am perfectly ready to aver."

"May I read the paper out?" said Hoare, with a malicious scowl at Cashel.

"There is no need that you should, Sir," said Roland; "its contents are known to me, whom alone they concern."

"You can, I opine, have no objection that your friend, Dr. Tiernay, should hear them?"

"I repeat, Sir, that with the contents of that paper, neither you nor any one else has any concern; they relate to me, and to me alone."

"Then I must labour under some misapprehension," said Hoare, affectedly; "I had fancied there was another person at least equally interested."

"Will you dare, Sir!" said Roland; and in the thick guttural utterance there was that which made the other tremble with fear.

"If the matter be one, then," said he, rallying into his former assurance, "that you deem best kept secret, it would be perhaps a judicious preliminary to any conversation on the subject, that Dr. Tiernay should withdraw."

"I only await Mr. Cashel's pleasure," said Tiernay, moving towards the door.

"Then you will remain, Sir," said Roland, firmly. "Remain, and listen to what this gentleman has so menacingly alluded. Here it is: it is the promise, given under my hand, that I will espouse the daughter of a certain Don Pedro Rica, to whom, in the date herein annexed, I have been this day betrothed; or, in forfeiture of such pledge, pay down the sum of seventy thousand dollars, thereby obtaining a full release from the conditions of the contract. It was the

rash pledge of a young and thoughtless boy, with regard to one who neither accepted his affection nor acknowledged the contract. I do not say this to absolve myself from the forfeiture, which I am ready to acquit this hour. I speak of it, that, as a man of honour, I may not seem to pay a debt of feeling by a cheque on my banker."

"But this betrothal," said Tiernay; "what does it imply?"

"It is a ceremony common enough in Old Spain and her once colonies, and is simply the public recognition of a private promise of marriage."

"You have forgotten two circumstances, Sir," said Hoare, whose eyes never quitted Cashel's face.

"Which are they?"

"One is, that this contract should be either fulfilled, or the forfeit paid, within two years; twenty-one months of which have already expired."

"True!—and the other condition?"

"That the acceptance or refusal of the forfeit is optional with Don Pedro, who may, at his pleasure, select which clause he likes—the marriage or the penalty."

"I never acknowledged this interpretation of the document," said Cashel, reddening. "I know Don Pedro did, and there we were at issue. Methinks it were somewhat hard to compel a marriage distasteful to both parties, and only to suit the speculations of a ruined adventurer."

"I hope, Sir, the likelihood of future relationship will moderate the warmth of your language."

"And is the man fool enough to fancy such a promise could be legally enforced in this country?" said Tiernay.

"He is not without the opinion of learned counsel," said Hoare; "who are strongly of opinion that the interpretations Columbian law would put upon the document would be recognised by our own Courts, and recognise the marriage as such."

"And does he, or do you, suppose," said Cashel, indignantly, "that I could expose her name, were I indifferent about my own, to be bandied about your assize courts, and printed in newspapers, and made the gossip of the town for a nine-days' wonder?" He stopped, for he saw by the elation of Hoare's features with what triumph this avowal had been listened to. "And now, Sir, enough has been said of this; I come back to my former question—How came you by this paper?"

"I received it from Don Pedro, with whom I have had much business intercourse, and who left it in my hands a few days back."

"Then he is in the country?" said Cashel, anxiously.

Hoare nodded an assent.

"Here, in Ireland! and is Mari——" He stopped suddenly, re-

membering to whom he was speaking; but Hoare, as if eager to show an intimacy with names and events, said,

"Yes, Sir, she is also here."

Cashel became silent; his mind, a very chaos of confused thought; memories of his buccaneer life—its lawless habits—its wild companionship—its adventures of love and war—of play—of heroism—and of mad debauch. The Villa and Maritaña were before him as last he saw her at the fountain; and from these he came to his fine and lordly friendships, with all their fictitious warmth; and he began to fancy how would his present society—the very guests at that moment beneath his roof—receive or recognise his old associates.

The deep preoccupation of his look suggested to Tiernay's mind the notion that Cashel was overwhelmed by the intelligence he had just received, and drawing close to him, he said, in a whisper,

"That fellow is watching and enjoying your confusion; put a bolder face on the matter, and we'll see what is best to be done."

Roland started, and then, as if by an effort chasing away an unpleasant thought, he said to Hoare,

"Our first business is Mr. Corrigan's. The sum due is——"

"Three thousand seven hundred and forty."

"Will you accept my bill for this?"

"At what date, Sir?" said Hoare, cautiously.

"At whatever date you please; a month or a week."

"A month be it."

"Does that release Mr. Corrigan from every claim so far as your principal is concerned?"

"All, up to this date."

"By which, probably, you would imply, that new liabilities may begin again. Is that so?"

"I think, from the nature of Mr. Leicester's claim, such an event is not impossible."

"Never mind the threat," whispered Tiernay—"it is but a threat."

"As to the other affair," said Cashel, approaching Hoare, "I will accompany you to town. I will see Don Pedro myself."

"That will be difficult, Sir. I am not at liberty to mention his place of abode; nor does he wish his presence here to be known."

"But to *me*," said Cashel, "this objection cannot apply."

"His orders are positive, and without qualification; but any proposition which you desire to submit——"

"Can come through Mr. Hoare?" said Cashel, sneeringly. "I prefer doing these things in person, Sir."

"Leave this to me," whispered Tiernay; "I'll manage him better."

Cashel squeezed his friend's arm in assent, and turned away; while Hoare, reseating himself, proceeded to draw out the bill for Cashel's signature.

"You are aware," said Tiernay, "that Corrigan can give you nothing but personal security for this sum, and the lease of Tubberbeg?" But Cashel did not heed the remark, deep as he was in his own reflections. "There is a small sum—a few thousand pounds—of Mary's, settled at her mother's marriage. You are not attending to me," said he, perceiving the preoccupation of Roland's look. "I was mentioning that Mary Leicester——"

"Yes," said Cashel, talking his thoughts aloud, "to marry her would, indeed, be the true solution of the difficulty."

"What did you say?" whispered Tiernay, upon whose ear the muttered words fell distinctly.

"She would refuse me," Roland went on; "the more certainly that I am rich. I know her well; the rank, the station, the thousand flatteries that wealth bestows, would be things for her mockery if unallied with power."

"You are wrong, quite wrong," said Tiernay; "her ambition is of a different order. Mary Leicester——"

"Mary Leicester!" echoed Cashel; and, in his suddenly awakened look, Tiernay at once perceived that some mistake had occurred. Hoare relieved the awkwardness of the moment as he said,

"This wants but your signature, Sir, and the matter is finished."

Cashel wrote his name on the bill and was turning away, when Hoare said,

"These are the bills; they are now your property, Sir."

"For what purpose?"

"They are vouchers for your claim on Mr. Corrigan," said Hoare.

"His word will suffice," said Cashel; and gathering them up, he hurled them into the fire.

"A costly blaze that," said Hoare, as he watched the conflagration.

"Speak to him, Doctor; learn what you can of Rica for me; if money will do it, I'll not quarrel with the price," said Cashel to Tiernay, in a low tone. "Another point—I was nigh forgetting it—you'll not tell Mr. Corrigan how the matter has been arranged. Promise me this. Nay, I have a reason for it—a reason you shall hear to-morrow or next day, and will acknowledge to be good. Keep my secret for a month; I ask no longer."

"For a month, then, I am silent," said Tiernay.

"Let me see you to-morrow early," said Cashel. "Will you breakfast with me?"

"No: I'll not risk my character by going twice to your grand house in the same week; besides, I am going to Limerick."

"Good night, then," said Cashel; "good night, Sir." And with a formal bow to Hoare, Roland left the room, and took his way homeward alone.

CHAPTER XII.

The Devil's back-parlour—a bachelor's room!
MILYARD.

WHILE Cashel continued his way homeward, a very joyous party had assembled in Lord Charles Frobisher's room, who were endeavouring, by the united merits of cigars, écarté, hazard, and an excellent supper, of which they partook at intervals, to compensate themselves for the unusual dulness of the drawing-room. It is well known how often the least entertaining individuals in general society become the most loquacious members of a party assembled in this fashion. The restraints which had held them in check before are no longer present. Their loud speech and empty laughter are not any longer under ban, and they are tolerated by better men, pretty much as children are endured, because at least they are natural.

At a round table in the middle of the room were a group engaged at hazard. Upton was deep in écarté with his brother officer, Jennings, while Frobisher lounged about, sipping weak negus, and making his bets at either table as fancy or fortune suggested. The supper-table had few votaries; none, indeed, were seated at it save Meek, who, with a newspaper on his knee, seemed singularly out of place in the noisy gathering.

"Eleven's the nick—eleven! I say, Charley, have at you for a pony," called out a boyish-looking Dragoon, from the middle table.

"You're under age, young gentleman," said Frobisher; "I can't afford to bet with you. Wait a moment, Upton, I'll back you this time. Twenty sovereigns—will you have it?"

"Done!" said Jennings, and the game began.

"The King," cried Upton; "I propose."

"To which of them?" said a sharp-looking Infantry Captain, behind his chair.

"Olivia, of course," slipped in Jennings.

"I'd give fifty pounds to know if they have the money people say," cried Upton.

"Meek can tell you—*he* knows everything. I say, Downie," said Jennings, "come here for a moment, and enlighten us on a most interesting point."

"Oh dear! what is it? This room is so very cold. Don't you think, Frobisher, that a double door would be advisable?"

"A green one, with a centre pane of glass, would make it devilish like a 'hell,'" said Upton; upon which the company all laughed approvingly.

"What is it you want?" said Meek, approaching, glass in hand.

"Play out the game, and have your gossip afterwards," said Frobisher, who felt far more anxious about the fate of his twenty pounds than for the result of the conversation.

"A Queen of Hearts," said Upton, leading; then, turning to Meek, said, "These Kennyfeck girls—can you tell what the figure is?"

"Poor dear things," said Meek, piteously; "they should be very well off."

"I score two!" said Upton. "Well, have they twenty thousand each?"

"I should say more. Oh dear me! they must have more! Kennyfeck holds a heavy mortgage on Kilgoff's estate, and has a great deal of other property."

"Then it would be a good thing, Meek, eh?" said Jennings.

"Game!" cried Upton, showing his cards upon the table.

"There is so much chaffing about girls and their fortunes, one can't play his game here," said Jennings, as he threw down a handful of gold on the board.

"Who was it ordered the post-horses for to-morrow?" said a youth at the supper-table. "The MacFarlines?"

"No; Lord Kilgoff."

"I assure you," cried a third, "it was the Kennyfecks. There has been a 'flare-up' about money between Cashel and him, and it is said he'll lose the agency. Who'll get it, I wonder?"

"Tom Linton, of course," said the former speaker. "I'd wager he is gone off to Dublin to furbish up securities, or something of that kind."

"Who'd give Tom trust, or go bail for him?" said Frobisher.

A very general laugh did not sound like a contradiction of the sentiment.

"I heard a week ago," said the Cornet, "that Kilgoff would stand security to any amount for him."

"Ah, that comes of my Lady's good opinion of him!" cried Jennings.

"Nay, don't say that, it looks so ill-natured," sighed Meek; "and there is really nothing in it. You know she and Tom were old friends. Oh dear, it was so sad!"

"Where does Cashel get such execrable champagne?" said an Infantry man, with a very wry expression of face.

"It's dry wine, that's all," said Frobisher, "and about the best ever imported."

"We'd be very sorry to drink it at our mess, my Lord, I know that," said the other, evidently nettled at the correction.

"Yours is the Fifty-third?" said a Guardsman.

"No; the Thirty-fifth."

"Aw! same thing," sighed he; and he stooped to select a cigar.

"I wish the Kennyfecks were not going," said Upton, drawing his chair closer to Meek's; "there are so few houses one meets them at."

"You should speak to Linton about that," whispered Meek.

"Here's Jim's health—hip, hip, hurrah!" cried out a white moustached boy, who had joined a Hussar regiment a few weeks before, and was now excessively tipsy.

The laughter at this toast was increased by Meek's holding out his glass to be filled, as he asked, "Of course—whose health is it?"

"One of Frobisher's trainers," said Upton, readily.

"No, it's no such thing," hiccupped the Hussar. "I was proposing a bumper to the lightest snaffle hand from this to Doncaster—the best judge of a line of country in the kingdom——"

"That's me," said a jolly voice; and at the same instant the door was flung wide, and Tom Linton, splashed from the road, and travel-stained, entered.

"I must say, gentlemen, you are no churls of your wit and pleasantry, for, as I came up the stairs, I could hear every word you were saying."

"Oh dear, how dreadful! and we were talking of *you*, too," said Meek, with a piteous air, that made every one laugh.

A thousand questions as to where he had been—whom with—and what for? all burst upon Linton, who only escaped importunity by declaring that he was half dead with hunger, and would answer nothing till he had eaten.

"So," said he, at length, after having devoted twenty minutes to a grouse pie of most cunning architecture, "you never guessed where I had been?"

"Oh! we had guesses enough, if that served any purpose."

"I thought it was a bolt, Tom," said Upton; "but as *she* appeared at breakfast, as usual, I saw my mistake."

"Meek heard that you had gone over to Downing-street to ask for the Irish Secretaryship," said Jennings.

"I said you had been to have a talk with Scott about 'Regulator;' was I far off the mark?"

"Mrs. White suggested an uncle's death," said Frobisher; "but uncles don't die now-a-days."

"Did you buy the colt?—Have you backed 'Runjeet Singh?'—Are you to have the agency?—How goes on the borough canvass?" and twenty similar queries now poured in on him.

"Well, I see," cried he, laughing, "I shall sadly disappoint all the calculations founded on my shrewdness and dexterity, for the whole object of my journey was to secure a wardrobe for our fancy ball, which I suddenly heard of as being at Limerick; and so, not trust-

ing the mission to another, I started off myself, and here I am, with materials for more Turks, Monks, Sailors, Watchmen, Greeks, Jugglers, and Tyrolese, than ever travelled in anything save a caravan with one horse."

"Are your theatrical intentions all abandoned?" cried Jennings.

"I trust not," said Linton; "but I heard that Miss Meek had decided on the ball to come off first."

"Hip! hip! hip!" was moaned out, in very lachrymose tone, from a sofa where the boy Hussar, very sick and very tipsy, lay stretched on his back.

"Who is that yonder?" asked Linton.

"A young fellow of ours," said Jennings, indolently.

"I thought they made their heads better at Sandhurst."

"They used in my time," said Upton; "but you have no idea how the thing has gone down."

"Quite true," chimed in another; "and I don't think we've seen the worst of it yet. Do you know, they talk of an examination for all candidates for commissions?"

"Well, I must say," lisped the Guardsman, "I believe it would be an improvement for the 'Line.'"

"The Household Brigade can dispense with information," said an Infantry Captain.

"I demur to the system altogether," said Linton. "Physicians tell us that the intellectual development is always made at the expense of the physical, and as one of the duties of a British army is to suffer yellow fever in the West Indies and cholera in the East, I vote for leaving them strong in constitution and intact in strength as vacant heads and thoughtless skulls can make them."

"Oh dear me! yes," sighed Meek, who, by one of his mock concurrences, effectually blinded the less astute portion of the audience from seeing Linton's impertinence.

"What has been doing here in my absence?" said Linton; "have you no event worth recording for me?"

"There is a story," said Upton, "that Cashel and Kennyfeck have quarrelled—a serious rupture, they say, and not to be repaired."

"How did it originate?—Something about the management of the property?"

"No, no—it was a row among the women. They laid some scheme for making Cashel propose for one of the girls."

"Not Olivia, I hope?" said Upton, as he lighted a new cigar.

"I rather suspect it was," interposed another.

"In any case, Linton," cried Jennings, "you are to be the gainer, for the rumour says, Cashel will give you the agency, with his house to live in, and a very jolly thing to spend, while he goes abroad to travel."

"If this news be true, Tom," said Frobisher, "I'll quarter my yearlings on you; there is a capital run for young horses in those flats along the river."

"The house is cold at this season," said Meek, with a sad smile; "but I think it would be very endurable in the autumn months. I shouldn't say but you may see us here again at that time."

"I hope 'ours' may be quartered at Limerick," said an Infantry man, with a most suggestive look at the comforts of the apartment, which were a pleasing contrast to barrack-room accommodation.

"Make yourselves perfectly at home here, gentlemen, when that good time comes," said Linton, with one of his careless laughs. "I tell you frankly, that if Cashel does make me such a proposal—a step which, from his knowledge of my indolent, lazy habits, is far from likely—I only accept on one condition."

"What is that?" cried a dozen voices.

"That you will come and pass your next Christmas here."

"Agreed—agreed!" was chorused on every side.

"I suspect, from that bit of spontaneous hospitality," whispered Frobisher to Meek, "that the event is something below doubtful."

Meek nodded.

"What is Charley saying?" cried Linton, whose quick eye caught the glance interchanged between the two.

"I was telling Meek," said Frobisher, "that I don't put faith enough in the condition to accept the invitation."

"Indeed!" said Linton, while he turned to the table and filled his glass, to hide a passing sign of mortification.

"Tom Linton, for a man's agent, seems pretty like what old Frederick used to call, keeping a Goat for a Gardener."

"You are fond of giving the odds, Frobisher," said Linton, who, for some minutes, continued to take glass after glass of champagne; "now, what's your bet that I don't do the honours here next Christmas-day?"

"I can't say what you mean," said Frobisher, languidly. "I've seen you do 'the honours' at more than one table where you were the guest."

"This, I suppose, is meant for a pleasantry, my Lord?" said Linton, while his face became flushed with passion.

"It is meant for fact," said Frobisher, with a steady coolness in his air and accent.

"A fact! and not in jest, then!" said he, approaching where the other sat, and speaking in a low voice.

"That's very quarrelsome wine, that dry champagne," said Frobisher, lazily; "don't drink any more of it."

Linton tried to smile; the effort, at first not very successful, be-

The Wager

came easier after a moment, and it was with a resumption of his old manner he said,

"I'll take you two to one in fifties that I act the host here this day twelvemonth."

"You hear that offer, gentlemen?" said Frobisher, addressing the party. "Of course it is meant without any reservation, and so I take it."

He produced a betting-book as he said this, and began to write in it with his pencil.

"Would you prefer it in hundreds?" said Linton.

Frobisher nodded an assent.

"Or shall we do the thing sportingly, and say two thousand to one?" continued he.

"Two thousand to one be it," said Frobisher, while the least possible smile might be detected on his usually immovable features. "There is no knowing how to word this bet," said he, at last, after two or three efforts, followed by as many erasures; "you must write it yourself."

Linton took the pencil, and wrote rapidly for a few seconds.

"Will that do?" said he.

And Frobisher read to himself—"'Mr. Linton, two thousand to one with Lord C. Frobisher, that he, T. L., on the anniversary of this day, shall preside as master of the house Tubbermore, by due right and title, and not by any favour, grace, or sanction of any one whatsoever.'"

"Yes; that will do, perfectly," said Frobisher, as he closed the book, and restored it to his pocket.

"Was the champagne so strong as you expected?" whispered Upton, as he passed behind Frobisher's chair.

A very knowing nod of acquiescence was the only reply.

Indeed, it did not require the practised shrewdness of Lord Charles, or his similarly sharp-eyed friends, to see that Linton's manner was very different from his habitual calm collectedness, while he continued to drink on, with the air of a man that was resolved on burying his faculties in the excitement of wine.

Meek slipped away soon after, and, at Linton's suggestion, a rouge-et-noir bank was formed, at which the play became high, and his own losses very considerable.

It was already daylight, and the servants were stirring in the house ere the party broke up.

"Master Tom has had a squeeze to-night," said Jennings, as he was bidding Upton good-by at his door.

"I can't understand it at all," replied the other. "He played without judgment, and betted rashly on every side. It was far more like Roland Cashel than Tom Linton."

"Well, you remember he said—to be sure, it was after drinking a quantity of wine—'Master Roland and I may change characters yet. Let us see if he can play "Linton," as well as I can "Cashel." ' "

"He's so deep, that I wouldn't say but there is something under all this." And so they parted, sadly puzzled what interpretation to put on conduct, the mere result of a passing intemperance; for so it is, "your cunning men" are never reputed to be so deep by the world as when by some accident they have forgotten their craft.

CHAPTER XIII.

With a bright lie upon his hook,
He played mankind, as anglers play a fish.
COTTER.

An hour's sleep and a cold bath restored Linton to himself, and ere the guests of Tubbermore were stirring, he was up and ready for the day. He dressed with more than usual care, and having ordered a horse to be saddled and a groom to follow him, he sauntered out into the park, taking the road that led to the village.

The groom rapidly overtook him; and then, mounting, he rode at a brisk trot down the road, and drew up at the door of the Doctor's house. To his question, "If Mr. Tiernay were at home?" he received for answer, that "He had set out for Limerick that morning," nor did the servant know when he might be expected back.

For a moment this intelligence appeared to derange his plans, but he rallied soon, and turning his horse's head towards Tubbermore, muttered to himself: "As well—perhaps better as it is." He rode fast till he gained the wood, and then dismounting, he gave the horse to the groom, with directions to go home, as he would return on foot.

He stood looking after the horses as they retired, and it seemed as if his thoughts were following them, so intent was his gaze; but, long after they had disappeared, he remained standing in the same place, his features still wearing the same expression of highly-wrought occupation. The spot where he stood was a little eminence, from which the view stretched, upon one side, over the waving woods of the demesne; and, on the other, showed glimpses of the Shannon, as, in its sweeping curves, it indented the margin of the grounds. Perhaps not another point could be found which displayed so happily the extent and importance of the demesne, and yet concealed so well whatever detracted from its picturesque effect. The neighbouring village of Derraheeny—a poor, straggling, ruinous street of thatched hovels, like most Irish villages—was altogether hidden from view, while of

the great house itself, an object with few pretensions to architectural elegance, only so much was visible as indicated its size and extent. The little cottage of Tubber-beg, however, could be seen, entire, glittering in the morning's sun like a gem, its bright-leaved hollies and dark laurels forming a little grove of foliage in the midst of winter's barrenness.

If this was by far the most striking object of the picture, it was not that which attracted most of Linton's attention. On the contrary, his eye ranged more willingly over the wide woods which stretched for miles along the river's side, and rose and fell in many a gentle undulation inland. A common-place observer, had such been there to mark him, would have pronounced him one passionately devoted to scenery; a man who loved to watch the passing cloud-shadows of a landscape, enjoying with all a painter's delight the varying tints, the graceful lines, the sharp-thrown shadows, and the brilliant lights of a woodland picture; a deeper physiognomist would, however, have seen that the stern stare, and the compressed lip, the intense preoccupation which every feature exhibited, did not denote a mind bent upon such themes.

"Tom Linton, of Tubbermore," said he, at length—and it seemed as if uttering the words gave relief to his overburdened faculties, for his face relaxed, and his habitual, easy smile returned to his mouth—"Linton, of Tubbermore; it sounds well, too.

"And then the great game! that game for which I have pined so long and wished so ardently—which I have stood by and seen others play and lose, where I could have won—ay, won rank, honour, station, and fame. The heaviest curse that lies on men like me is to watch those who rise to eminence in the world and know their utter shallowness and incapacity. There will soon be an end to that now. Stand by, gentlemen; make way, my Lords Charles and Harry; it is Tom Linton's turn—not Linton the 'Adventurer,' as you were gracious enough to call him—not the bear-leader of a Marquis, or the hanger-on of his Grace the Duke, but your equal in rank and fortune—more than your equal in other things; the man who knows you all thoroughly, not fancying your deficiencies and speculating on your short-comings, as your vulgar adversaries, your men of cotton constituencies, are wont to do, but the man who has seen you in your club and your drawing-room, who has eaten, drunk, betted, played and lived with you all! who knows your tactics well, and can expound your 'aristocratic prejudices better than ever a Quaker of them all!' —Not but," said he, after a pause, "another line would satisfy me equally. The Peerage, with such a fortune as this, is no inordinate ambition; a few years in the House, of that dogged, unmanageable conduct Englishmen call independence—a capriciousness in voting—the repute of refusing office, and so on. There's no originality in the

thought, but it succeeds as well as if there were! Besides, if hard pressed, I can be a Romanist, and, as times go, with every party; that is a strong claim. And why not Lord Linton? I have no doubt"—and he laughed as he spoke this—"there *is* a Peerage in the family already, if I only knew where to look for it!

"And now, sufficient of speculation! to open the campaign!" So saying, he descended the knoll, and took the path which led to the cottage. As he drew near the wicket, he saw a man lounging beside it, in all that careless indifference which an Irish peasant can assume, and soon perceived it was Tom Keane, the gatekeeper.

"Good morrow, Tom; how comes it you are up here so early?"

"'Tis in throuble I am, your Honer," said he, taking off his hat, and putting on that supplicating look so characteristic of his class. "The master's going to turn me out of the little place beyant."

"What for?"

"For nothing at all, your Honer: that's just it; but ould Kennyfeck put him up to it."

"Up to what? That seems the whole question."

"Your Honer may remimber, that when you came here first, the cattle of the neighbours was used to come and pick a mouthful of grass—and poor grass it was—bekase there was no way of keeping them out. Well, when the master came down, and all the people, by coorse the cows and pigs couldn't be let in as afore; for, as the agint said, it was a disgrace to see them under the nose of the quality, running about as if it was Donnybrook fair! 'Don't let them appear here again, Tom Keane,' says he, 'or it will be worse for you.' And sorra one ever I let in since that, till it was dark night. But ould Mr. Kennyfeck, the other evening, takes it into his head to walk into the park, and comes right into a crowd of two-year-old bulls, and didn't know a bit where he was, till a man called out, 'Lie down on your face, for the love of the Virgin, or you are a dead man. The bullsheens is comin'!' And down he lay, sure enough, and hard work they had to get him up afterwards, for the herd went over him as the man drov' them off; and what between bruises and fear, he kept his bed two days; but the worst of it was, the spalpeens said that they paid threepence apiece for the bullsheens every night for the grass, and it was to me they gave it."

"Which, of course, was untrue?" said Linton, smiling knowingly.

"By coorse it was!" said Tom, with a laugh, whose meaning there was no mistaking; "and so, I'm to be turned out of 'the gate,' and to lose my few acres of ground, and be thrun on the wide world, just for sake of an attorney!"

"It is very hard—very hard indeed."

"Isn't it now, your Honer?"

"A case of destitution, completely; what the newspapers call 'extermination.'"

"Exactly, Sir—tarnination, and nothing less."

"But how comes it that you are up here, on that account?"

"I was thinking, Sir, if I saw Miss Mary, and could get her to spake a word to the master—they say she can do what she plazes with him."

"Indeed!—who says so?"

"The servants' hall says it; and so does Mr. Corrigan's ould butler. He towld me the other day that he hoped he'd be claning the plate up at the big house before he died."

"How so?" said Linton, affecting not to catch the intention of the remark.

"Just that he was to be butler at the Hall when the master was married to Miss Mary."

"And so, I suppose, this is very likely to happen?"

"Sure yer Honer knows betther than ignorant craytures like us; but faix, if walking about in the moonlight there among the flowers, and talking together like whisperin', is any sign, I wouldn't wonder if it came about."

"Indeed! and they have got that far?"

"Ay, faith!" said Tom, with a significance of look only an Irishman or an Italian can call up.

"Well, I had no suspicion of this," said Linton, with a frankness meant to invite further confidence.

"An' why would yer Honer? Sure wasn't it always on the evenings, when the company was all together in the great house, that Mr. Cashel used to steal down here and tie his horse to the wicket, and then gallop back again at full speed, so that the servants towld me he was never missed out of the room."

"And does she like him—do they say she likes him?"

"Not like him wid a place such as this!" said Tom, waving his hand towards the wide-spreading fields and woods of the demesne. "Bathershin! sure the Queen of England might be proud of it!"

"Very true," said Linton, affecting to be struck by the shrewdness of the speaker.

"See now," said Tom, who began to feel a certain importance from being listened to, "I know faymales well, and so I ought! but take the nicest, quietest, and most innocent one among them, and by my conscience ye'll see, 'tis money and money's worth she cares for more nor the best man that ever stepped! Tell her 'tis silk she'll be wearin', and goold in her ears, and ye may be as ould and ugly as Tim Hogan at the cross-roods!"

"You haven't a good opinion of the fair sex, Thomas," said Lin-

ton, carelessly, for he was far less interested in his speculations than his facts. "Well, as to your own case—leave that in my hands. I may not have all the influence of Miss Leicester, but I suspect that I can do what you want on this occasion." And without waiting for the profuse expressions of his gratitude, Linton passed on and entered the garden, through which a little path led directly to the door of the cottage.

"At breakfast, I suppose?" said Linton to the servant who received him.

"The master is, Sir; but Miss Mary isn't well this morning."

"Nothing of consequence, I hope?"

"Only a headache from fatigue, Sir." So saying, he ushered Linton, whose visits were admitted on the most intimate footing, into the room where Mr. Corrigan sat by himself at the breakfast-table.

"Alone, Sir!" said Linton, as he closed the door behind him, and conveying in his look an air of surprise and alarm.

"Yes, Mr. Linton, almost the only time I remember to have been so for many a year. My poor child has had a night of some anxiety, which, although bearing well at the time, has exacted its penalty at last in a slight attack of fever. It will, I trust, pass over in a few hours; and you—where have you been—they said you had been absent for a day or two?"

"A very short ramble, Sir—one of business rather than pleasure. I learned suddenly—by a newspaper paragraph, too—that a distant relative of my mother's had died in the East, leaving a considerable amount of property to myself; and so, setting out, I arrived at Limerick, intending to sail for Liverpool, when, who should I meet, almost the first person I saw, but my agent, just come in haste from London, to confer with me on the subject. The meeting was so far agreeable, that it saved me a journey I had no fancy for, and also put me in possession of the desired information regarding the property. My agent, speaking of course from imperfect knowledge, calls it a large—what a man like myself would style—a very large fortune."

"I give you joy, with all my heart," cried Corrigan, grasping his hand in both his, and shaking it cordially. "When wealth descends to men who have shown their ability to maintain an honourable station without it, the chances are greatly in favour of its being nobly and generously employed."

"How I hope that I may not disgrace your theory," said Linton, "for I am not ashamed to assert that I have fulfilled the first condition of the category. With little else but good birth and a fair education, I had to start in the race against others with every aid of fortune, and if I have not reached a more elevated position, I can say that the obstacle lay rather in my own scruples than my incapacity. I declined Parliamentary life because I would not be a nominee; I

had a glancing suspicion that my time would come, too, when, without other check upon my motives than the voice of conscience, I should stand in the British Senate a free and independent member. If I have waited patiently for this hour, I hope I have not abused the leisure interval, and that I may bring to the public service something besides the zeal of one who feels the importance of his trust."

"There is no failure with intentions pure and honourable as these," said Corrigan, warmly. "It does not need your talents, Mr. Linton, to ensure success in such a path; one-half of *your* ability, so nobly backed, would reach the goal. And now tell me, if I be not indiscreet in asking some of your plans, what place do you mean to stand for?"

"Our good borough of Derraheeny," said Linton, half smiling. "I am in a measure committed to continue my canvass there, and, indeed, have already entered into securities to keep my pledge. I see these words sound a little mysteriously, but I intend to explain them; only I must ask one favour of you. I hope, before I leave the room, to show that I have, if not a claim upon your generosity, at least a plea to warrant my request. My entreaty is this, that you will never divulge to any one what I shall now tell you."

"Pray, my dear friend, consider for a moment what you are asking. Why make me the depositary of a secret? An old man, whose very years are like 'fissures in the strong keep,' where mysteries should be imprisoned."

"Could I participate in your reasonings, my dear Sir, there is yet enough in the present instance to make it an exception. This is a matter you ought to know for *your* sake, and to keep secret for *mine*."

"Then you have my promise," said Corrigan, frankly.

"I'll be brief with my explanation," said Linton. "When there was a design, some time back, of my accepting the representation of the borough, Cashel offered me his property of Tubber-beg, on terms which very nearly approached a gift. This—though at the time our relations were those of the closest friendship—I refused; but, as I had made some progress in my canvass of the borough, there was a difficulty in abandoning the position; and so the matter hung, each hoping that the other would suggest some arrangement that might satisfy both. This fortunate device, however, was not to be discovered, and as, for some time back, our intercourse had become gradually less intimate, the chance of such a solution diminished daily.

"In this way the affair stood, when, a couple of mornings since, I felt it my duty, as one who really felt an interest in him, to remonstrate with Roland on a circumstance which, without any affectation of prudery, would have gravely compromised himself, and, worse still, another person. It was a case—I know not exactly how to touch

upon a matter of such delicacy—enough if I say it was one where a persistence in his conduct must have ended in disgrace to him, ruin and misery to another. Poor thing! she is, indeed, to be pitied; and if there be extenuation for such cases, hers is one to claim it. I knew her as Laura Gardiner, the handsomest creature I ever beheld. Well, well, it is a theme I must not linger on. Cashel, so far from receiving my counsel as I hoped, and indeed expected, resented it with anger and rudeness, and even questioned the degree of intimacy on which I presumed to give my unasked advice.

"I am fortunately a man of cool temper, and so I bore this ungenerous return better than most others might; and seeing that it would possibly be the last occasion I should ever have of giving even unwilling counsel, I spoke to him freely and openly. I told him that his mode of living, while derogatory to the hopes conceived of him, was one that must end at last in ruin; that no fortune could stand his losses at play, and the wasteful extravagance of his caprices. I pressed the matter as strongly as I was able, and represented that his habits bore no reference whatever to his income.

"'It is quite true,' said he, with a sneering tone; 'I cannot readily forget I am chargeable with all these wasteful ways you speak of, nor do I feel that I make any the slightest defence of myself, in regard to habits, where my generosity has been as lavish as it has been ill bestowed.'

"'I wish I knew if I understand you aright?' said I.

"'Your comprehension is of the quickest where there is question of a favour to be received.'

"I did not trust myself with any answer to this speech, which I well knew was a trait of his old buccaneer life. I withdrew, and hastening to his law-agent, Kennyfeck, I at once arranged for the purchase of this small property. The moment for me was propitious. They were in want of ready money, and the treaty was completed the same day. There is the title."

As he spoke, he threw down the parchment deed upon the table, and lay back in his chair, watching with intense delight the expression of sadness and disappointment on Corrigan's features.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the old man at last, "how deceived I have been in him!"

"I confess that is what wounds me most in the whole transaction," said Linton, with a mock emotion in his manner. "One is well accustomed through life to meet sordid motives in mere men of the world, and who deem their low-born subtlety cleverness; but to find a young fellow, beginning life with an ample fortune and a fair position, surrounded by all the blandishments that wealth charms up——"

"Hold!" cried Corrigan, laying his hand on Linton's arm; "I

cannot bear this. It is not at my age, Sir, that disappointments like these can be borne easily. I have too short a time before me here to hope to recover from such shocks."

"I would not willingly give you pain, my dear Sir; nor, indeed, is this the topic on which I am most anxious to address you. Another and a very different interest led me hither this morning; and, although I have thought long and maturely on the subject, I am as far as ever from knowing how to approach it. My own unworthiness to what I aspire recoils upon me at every instant, and nothing but the indulgent kindness with which you have always regarded me could give me courage. Forgive me this prolixity; I am like one who fears to plunge, lest he should never rise again."

"If my estimate of you be correct," said the old man, laying his hand upon Linton's, "the goal must needs be high to which you dare not aspire."

"It is indeed so!" cried Linton, as if carried away by an irresistible emotion. "To me it means station, hope, worldly success, happiness,—ay, life itself. I cannot longer tamper with your feelings, nor my own. The ambition of which I speak, is to be your son; not alone in the affectionate love which already I bear you, but by the closest and dearest ties, to be bound to you in the same chain by which she is, who owns all my heart and all my destiny."

He stopped as if overcome; and Corrigan, compassionating the agitation he seemed to suffer, said,

"Be calm, my dear friend; this takes me by surprise. I was not in any way prepared for such an announcement; nor have I courage to look at its consequences; poor, old, companionless as I should be——"

"Nay, such cruelty was not in my thoughts. It was with far other intentions I became possessed of the property. It was in the glorious hope that it would be our home—yours and mine together; not to render your hearth desolate, but to give it another guest, whose duty would be his title to be there."

"Let me think,—let me reflect on this,—let me separate my own selfish thoughts from the higher ones that should guide me. You have not spoken to my daughter?"

"No, Sir; I deemed the more honourable course to have your sanction; or, if not that, to bury my sorrows in silence for ever."

"There is so much to consider, and I am so weak and infirm, so inadequate to decide. Your proposal is a proud one for any girl, I know it; and we are proud, although poor. Ay, Mr. Linton, poor to very necessity! If her affections were engaged by you, if I saw that your high qualities had made the impression upon her that they have on me, I own this offer would delight me; but can you say this is the case?"

"I hope, Sir, I am not indifferent to Miss Leicester. The humble fortune which has restrained me hitherto, and prevented my prosecuting an attachment to which I felt I had no claim, exists no longer. I am independent in means, as in opinion; and, however conscious of my personal unworthiness in all that regards station and condition, I'm in a position to satisfy you. I only ask your sanction to address Miss Leicester—to know, in fact, that if I should prove acceptable to *her*, that *you* will not look unfavourably upon me."

"This appears most candid and fair on your part; and it is a time when we must both use candour and fairness. Now, Mr. Linton, there are circumstances which at this moment involve me in considerable difficulty; I cannot enter into them just yet; but they may offer grave obstacles to what you propose. I will, therefore, beg of you not to press me for my answer. I see this delay is displeasing——"

"Nay, Sir, I am ready to yield to anything you suggest; but is it not possible that my assistance and advice might be of service in these difficulties you speak of?"

"There is another point, Mr. Linton—and I know you will think better of me for all my frankness. Are your friends—your family I mean—aware of this step of yours; are you certain of their concurrence in it?"

"I have few relatives living, Sir," said Linton, reddening; "but I can answer for their participation in all that so nearly concerns my happiness."

"This evening, then; come to me this evening, then," said Mr. Corrigan, "and you shall hear my sentiments."

"This is most kind; I can ask for nothing more," said Linton; and with a most affectionate pressure of the old man's hand, departed.

CHAPTER XIV.

Be grateful too! you ask, "for what?"
Simply, for that you never got;
And you'll get something yet.

MACHIAVELLI TRAVESTIED.

MR. LINTON, like a large majority of the cunning people in this world, made the mistake of supposing that every one had an "afterthought"—some secret mental reservation in all he said; that, in fact, no one told "the whole truth" on any subject. Now, judging Mr. Corrigan by this rule, he came to the conclusion that the old gentleman had not received his addresses with all the warmth that

might be expected;—possibly, in the hope of a more advantageous offer—possibly, because, in his old Irish pride of family, he had got to learn who this Mr. Linton was, what his connexions, and what position they held in the society of their own country.

In this way did Linton read the old man's inquiry as to the "concurrence of his relatives." It was, to his thinking, a mere subtle attempt to ascertain who and what these same relatives were. "A clever stroke in its way," thought Tom, "but I am not to be drawn out of my entrenchment so easily. Still, the theme will linger in his mind, and must be got rid of."

Linton knew well how the influence of rank and title can smooth down difficulties of this kind, and ran over in his mind the names of at least a dozen Peers, any one of whom, in such an emergency, would have owned him for a half-brother, or a cousin, at least.

It was provoking to think how many there were, at that dull season, listless and unemployed, who could, were he only able to summon them, stand sponsors to his rank and condition. Measuring Corrigan by what he had witnessed in other men of small fortune and retired lives, he deemed "a Lord" was all-essential. Linton had seen a great deal of life, and a great deal of that submissive homage so readily conceded to nobility. A Lord, at a wedding, is like a Captain, in a duel. They are the great ingredients which warrant that these events "come off," properly. They place beyond all cavil or question whatever may occur; and they are the recognisances one enters into with the world that he is "spliced" or shot like a gentleman. It is quite true Linton was above this vulgarity; but he was not above the vulgarity of attributing it to another.

The more he reflected on this, the more did he believe it to be the solution of the whole difficulty. "My kingdom for a Lord!" exclaimed he, laughing aloud at the easy gullibility of that world which he had duped so often.

The reader is aware that of the pleasant company of Tubbermore, Lord Kilgoff was the only representative of the Peerage; and to him Linton's thoughts at once resorted, as the last hope in his emergency. Of late his Lordship had been gradually mending: clear intervals broke through the mist of his clouded faculties, and displayed him, for the time, in all his wonted self-importance, irritability, and pertinacity. To catch him in one of these fortunate moments was the object, and so induce him to pay a visit to the cottage.

Could he but succeed in this, none better than the old Peer to play the part assigned to him. The very qualities to make his society intolerable would be, here, the earnest of success. The imperturbable conceit, the pompous distance of his manner, would repel inquiry, and Linton saw that his oracle would not utter one word more than he ought.

"He will not—I dare not ask him—to call me his relative," said he; "but I can easily throw a hazy indistinctness over our intimacy. He can be a friend of 'my poor father'"—Tom laughed at the conceit—"one who knew me from the cradle. With him for a foreground figure, I'll soon paint an imaginary group around him, not one of whom shall be less than a Marquis.

"With Mary this will not succeed. Laura, indeed, might do me good service in that quarter, but I cannot trust her. Were she more skilled in this world's ways, she would gladly aid me—it would be like drawing the game between us; but she is rash, headlong, and passionate. I doubt if even her fears would control her. And, yet, I might work well upon these! I have the will, and the way, both! The event shall decide whether I employ them." With these thoughts passing in his mind he reached the house, and entering unobserved, since they were all at breakfast, repaired to his own room.

He immediately sat down and wrote a few lines to Lord Kilgoff, inquiring with solicitude after his health, and craving the favour of being permitted to wait upon him. This done, he amused himself by inventing a number of little political "gossipries" for the old Peer—those small nothings which form the sweepings of clubs and the whisperings of under-secretaries' offices; the pleasant trifles which every one repeats, but no one believes.

"My Lord will see Mr. Linton whenever he pleases," was the answer of the valet; and Linton lost no time in availing himself of the permission.

"His Lordship is at breakfast?" said he to the servant, as he walked along.

"Yes, Sir."

"And her Ladyship?"

"My Lady breakfasts below stairs, Sir."

"As it ought to be; he is alone," thought Linton, who in his present incertitude of purpose had no desire to meet her.

"If you'll have the goodness to wait a moment, Sir, I'll tell my Lord you are here," said the man, as he ushered Linton into a handsome drawing-room, which various scattered objects denoted to be her Ladyship's.

As Linton looked over the table, where books, drawings, and embroidery were negligently thrown, his eye caught many an object he had known long, long before; and there came over him, ere he knew it, a strange feeling of melancholy. The past rushed vividly to his mind—that time when, sharing with her all his ambitions and his hopes, he had lived in a kind of fairy world. He turned over the leaves of her sketch-book—she had done little of late—an unfinished bit, here and there, was all he found; and he sat gazing at the earlier drawings, every one of which he remembered. There was one of an

old pine-tree scathed by lightning, at the top, but spreading out, beneath, into a light and feathery foliage, beneath which they had often sat together. A date in pencil had been written at the foot, but was now erased, leaving only enough to discover where it had been. Linton's breathing grew hurried, and his pale cheek paler, as with his head resting on his hands he sat, bent over this. "I was happier, then," said he, with a sigh that seemed to rise from his very heart—"far happier! But would it have lasted! that is the question. Would mere love have compensated for thwarted ambition, delusive hope, and poverty? How should I have borne continued reverses?"

The door opened, and Lady Kilgoff entered; not seeing him, nor expecting any one in the apartment, she was humming an opera air, when suddenly she perceived him. "Mr. Linton here? This is a surprise indeed!" exclaimed she, as, drawing herself proudly up, she seemed to question the reason of his presence.

"I beg you will forgive an intrusion which was not of my seeking. I came to pay my respects to Lord Kilgoff, and his servant showed me into this chamber until his Lordship should be ready to receive me."

"Won't you be seated, Sir?" said she, with an accent which it would be difficult to say whether it implied an invitation or the opposite.

Few men had more self-possession than Linton, fewer still knew better how to construe a mere accent, look, or a gesture, and yet, he stood now, uncertain and undecided how to act. Meanwhile Lady Kilgoff, arranging the frame of her embroidery, took her seat near the window.

"Penelope must have worked in Berlin wool, I'm certain," said Linton, as he approached where she sat. "These wonderful tissues seem never to finish."

"In that lies their great merit," replied she, smiling; "it is sometimes useful to have an occupation whose monotony disposes to thought, even when the thoughts themselves are not all pleasurable."

"I should have fancied that monotony would dispose to brooding," said he, slowly.

"Perhaps it may, now and then," said she, carelessly. "Life, like climate, should not be all sunshine;" and then, as if wishing to change the theme, she added, "You have been absent a day or two?"

"Yes; an unexpected piece of fortune has befallen me. I find myself the heir of a considerable property, just as I have reached that point in life when wealth has no charm for me! There was a time when——but, no matter; regrets are half-brother to cowardice."

"We can no more help one than the other, occasionally," said she, with a faint sigh; and both were silent for some time.

"Is not that tulip somewhat too florid?" said he, stooping over her embroidery.

"That tulip is a poppy, Mr. Linton."

"What a natural mistake, after all!" said he. "How many human tulips who, not only look like, but are, downright poppies! Is not this house intolerably stupid?"

"I'm ashamed to own I think it pleasant," said she, smiling.

"You were more fastidious once, if my memory serves me aright," said he, meaningly.

"Perhaps so," said she, carelessly. "I begin to fancy that odd people are more amusing than clever ones; and, certainly, they entertain without an effort, and that is an immense gain."

"Do you think so? I should have supposed the very effort would have claimed some merit, showing that the desire to please had prompted it."

"My Lord will see Mr. Linton at present," said the servant.

Linton nodded, and the man withdrew.

"How long ago is it since you made this sketch?" said he, opening the book, as if accidentally, at the page with the pine-tree.

She turned, and although her bent-down head concealed her features, Linton saw the crimson flush spread over the neck as she answered, "About three years ago."

"Scarcely so much," said he. "If I mistake not, I wrote the date myself beneath it; but it has worn out."

"You will excuse my reminding you, Mr. Linton, that Lord Kilgoff has not regained his habitual patience, and will be very irritable if you defer a pleasure such as a visit from you always affords him."

"Happy conjuncture," said he, smiling, "that can make my presence desired, in one quarter, when my absence is wished for, in another." And with a low, respectful bow, he left the room.

Whatever the object of the hint, Lady Kilgoff had not exaggerated his Lordship's deficiency in the Job-like element, and Linton found him, on entering, interrogating the servant as to whether he "had conveyed his message properly, and what answer he had received."

"That will do. Leave the room," said he. Then turning to Linton, "I have waited twelve minutes, Sir—nearly thirteen—since my servant informed you I would receive you."

"I am exceedingly sorry, my Lord, to have occasioned you even a moment of impatience. I was mentioning to Lady Kilgoff a circumstance of recent good fortune to myself, and I grieve that my egotism should have mastered my sense of propriety."

"Twelve minutes, or thirteen, either, may seem a very unimportant fraction of time to men of mere pleasure, but to those whose weightier cares impose graver thoughts, is a very considerable inroad, Sir."

"I know it, my Lord. I feel it deeply, and I beg you to excuse me."

"Life is too short, at least in its active period, to squander twelve minutes, Mr. Linton; and however you, in *your* station, and with

your pursuits, may deem otherwise, I would wish to observe that persons in *mine* think differently."

Linton looked a perfect statue of contrition, nor did he utter another word. Perhaps he felt that continuing the discussion would be but an indifferent mode of compensating for the injury already incurred.

"And now, Mr. Linton, I conclude that it was not without a reason you sought an interview at this unusual hour?"

"The old story, my Lord; and as I came to ask a favour, I selected the *petit lever* as the most appropriate hour."

"Indeed! you surprise me much how an individual so much forgotten as Lord Kilgoff can possibly be of service to that most promising gentleman Mr. Linton!"

Linton never heeded the sarcastic discontent of the speech, but went on:

"Yes, my Lord, you find me as you have so often found me, a suppliant."

"I've nothing to bestow, Sir."

"You can do all that I could ask, or even wish for, my Lord. My ambition is not very unmeasured; my greatest desire is to have the opportunity of frequent intercourse with you, and the benefit of that practical wisdom for which your Lordship's conversation is distinguished at home and abroad."

"My valet is not going to leave me," said the old man, with an insolence of look that tallied with the rude speech.

"My Lord!——"

"Nay, nay, you must not be offended; I was rather jesting on my own barrenness of patronage than upon your proposal."

Linton saw by the slight advantage he had gained that the bold course was the more promising, and continued:

"You will soon have a great deal of business on your hands, my Lord, and so, I will economise your time and your patience. You have not heard, I am aware, that Dollington has been recalled. The mission at Florence is to give away, and I am here to ask for the Secretaryship. I know well that the appointment is a Foreign-office one; but Blackwell, who gives me the present information, says, 'If you have interest with Kilgoff push it now: his recommendation will, I know, be attended to.' He then goes on to say that Dollington is most anxious to know if you would take his house off his hands. He has been furnishing and arranging the interior most expensively, never dreaming of a recal."

"When did this news come?" said Lord Kilgoff, sitting down and wiping his forehead, on which the perspiration now stood, from agitation.

"Yesterday. Blackwell sent a cabinet messenger to me, but with

the strictest injunctions to secrecy. In fact, the rumour would call so many suitors in the field, that the Foreign-office would be besieged."

"You can rely upon it, however?"

"Unquestionably. Blackwell writes me that the thing is done. You will receive the offer immediately after the recess."

"You acted very properly, I must say—very properly, indeed, in giving me this early notice of his Majesty's gracious intentions with regard to me; the more, as I shall have time to consider how far my views upon questions of Foreign politics are in agreement with those of the Government."

"Upon that point your Lordship's mind may be at rest. I gather from Blackwell that you will receive the widest discretion. The Secretary of State has named you as *the* man; of course, interference is out of the question."

"Of course it would be, Sir, were I to accept the mission. Dollington's house, I conclude, is a suitable one, and we'll think of it; and as to yourself, Linton, I really am at a loss what to say. Lady Kilgoff—it is best to be candid—is prejudiced against you. She thinks you satirical and sarcastic, as if"—and here he raised his head, and threw forward his chin with most imposing dignity—"as if the person who bore *my* name need fear such qualities anywhere; but besides this, it appears to *me* that your abilities are not diplomatic. You have neither that natural reserve, nor that suave impressiveness 'the line' requires. You are a Club man, and will probably make a very good House of Commons man; but diplomacy, Mr. Linton—diplomacy is a high, I had almost said a sacred, vocation! To all the *prestige* of family and ancient lineage must be added the most insinuating graces of manner. Personal advantages should be combined with a high cultivation, so that the Envoy may worthily mirror forth the Majesty he represents. It would be an inestimable benefit if the Eastern principle of 'caste' were observed in diplomacy, and the office of Ambassador be limited to certain families! Believe me, Sir, you may say of such, '*Nascitur non fit.*'"

As he spoke, his eyes flashed, and his cheek became flushed; the flutter of self-importance gave a fresh impulse to his circulation, and he walked back and forward in a perfect ecstasy of delight.

"Alas, my Lord! you have made me feel too deeply the presumption of my request. I confess, till I had listened to your eloquent exposition, I had formed other and very erroneous ideas upon this subject. I see, now, that I am quite unsuited to the career. The very fact that it becomes your Lordship, is evidence enough how unfitted it would prove to me."

"I will not say, that in Greece, or perhaps with some Republican Government, you might not be very eligible. We'll consider about it."

"No, no, my Lord; I'll content myself with more humble fortunes. I suppose there is always a place for every capacity—and now, to a matter purely personal to myself, and in which I hope I may count upon your kind co-operation. I have thoughts of marriage, my Lord, and as I am a stranger in this country, unconnected with it by kindred or connexion, I would ask of you to give me that sanction and currency which the honour of your Lordship's friendship confers. The lady upon whom I have fixed my choice is without fortune, but of a family which traces back to Royalty, I fancy. This Irish pride of lineage, then, requires that I, upon my side, should not be deficient in such pretensions."

"I am not a Clarencieux, nor Norroy, Sir, to make out your genealogy," said the old Peer, with ineffable disdain.

Linton had more difficulty to control his laughter than his anger at this impertinent absurdity. "I was not thinking of 'the tree,' my Lord, but its last and most insignificant twig, myself; and, remembering how many kindnesses I owed you, how uniformly your patronage had befriended me through life, I still reckon upon the feeling to serve me once more."

"Be explicit. What do you ask?" said he, leaning back and looking like a Monarch whose will was half omnipotence.

"What I should like, my Lord, is this—that you would permit me to drive you over some morning to the gentleman's house, where, presenting the family to your Lordship, I might, while enjoying the sanction of your intimacy and friendship, also obtain your opinion upon the merits of one with whom I would link my humble destinies. I have said that the lady has no fortune; but your Lordship has shown the noble example of selecting for far higher and more ennobling qualities than wealth." This was said with a spice of that subdued raillery of which Linton was a master; and he saw, with delight, how the old Peer winced under it.

"Very true, Sir; your remark is just, except that the disparity between our conditions does not give the instance the force of example; nor am I certain the experiment will be always successful!" The irritation under which the last words were uttered spread a triumphant joy through Linton's heart, nor dare he trust himself to speak, lest he should reveal it!

"Perhaps a letter, Mr. Linton, would answer your object? It appears to *me* that the condescension of a visit is a step too far in advance. You are aware that, in a day or two, as his Majesty's representative, etiquette would require that I should never make the initiative in acquaintance."

"Pardon my interrupting, my Lord; but that rule will only apply to you at the seat of your mission. Here, you have no other distinction than of being the well-known leader of the Irish Peerage—

the great head of an illustrious body, who look up to you for guidance and direction."

"You are right, perhaps, Sir—my station is what you have described it. I trust you have not mentioned to Lady Kilgoff anything of your Foreign-office news?"

"Of course not, my Lord. It will always remain with your discretion, when and how to make the communication."

"It appears to me, Sir, that her Ladyship has admitted many of the inmates here to a degree of intimacy quite inconsistent with their relative stations."

"Her Ladyship's youth and amiability of manner offer great temptations to the inroads of obtrusiveness," said Linton, with the air of one thinking aloud.

"I disagree with you, Sir, entirely. I was young myself, Sir, and, I am told, not quite destitute of those attractions you speak of; but I am not aware that any one ever took a liberty with *me!* This must be looked to. And now, your affair? When is it to come off? Your marriage, I mean?"

"That is by no means so certain, my Lord," said Linton, who smiled in spite of himself at the careless tone in which his Lordship treated so very humble an event. "I may reckon on your Lordship's assistance, however?"

Lord Kilgoff waved his hand in token of acquiescence, and Linton took a formal leave, almost bursting with laughter at the ridiculous conceit he had himself contributed to create.

"Ay," muttered he, as he descended the stairs, "as a democrat, an out-and-out democrat, I say, 'Long live an Hereditary Peerage!' I know nothing can equal it, in making the untitled classes the rulers."

CHAPTER XV.

So cunning, like the doubling of the hare,
Oft turns upon itself.

BELL.

IT was a rainy day—one of those downright pelting, pouring, swooping wet days which Ireland is accustomed to, for nearly one-half of every year. All out-of-door occupation was impossible; the most fidgety could only get as far as the stables, to smoke a cigar and "chaff" horse-talk with the grooms; while the more resigned wandered from room to room, and place to place, in that restlessness that defies common philosophy to subdue.

A wet day in a country-house is always a severe trial. Sociability will not be coerced, and the greater the necessity for mutual assistance, the less is the disposition to render it; besides, they who habitually contribute least to the enjoyment of their fellows, have always great resources of annoyance at such periods—as the most insignificant instrument in the orchestra can, at any moment, destroy the harmony of the band.

Scarcely was breakfast over in Tubbermore, than the guests were scattered in various directions, it was difficult to say where. Now and then, some one would peep into the drawing-room or the library, and, as if not seeing "the right man," shut the door noiselessly, and depart. Of the younger men, many were sleeping off the debauch of the previous evening. Downie Meek, who had a theory upon the subject, always kept his bed while it rained. Sir Andrew had, unfortunately, mistaken a lotion containing laudanum for some concoction of bitters, and was obliged to be kept eternally walking up and down stairs, along corridors and passages, lest he should drop asleep; his man, Flint, accompanying him with "the wakeful announcement" of "Hae a care, Sir Andrew, here's my Leddy," an antidote to the narcotic worth all the Pharmacopœia contained.

Lady Janet was meanwhile deep in the formation of a stomachic, which, judging from the maid's face as she tasted it, must needs have been of the pungent order. Mrs. White was letter-writing. Howle was sketching heads of the company, under the title of "Beauties of Ireland," for a weekly newspaper. Frobisher was instructing Miss Meek in the science of making knee-caps for one of his horses; and so with the remainder, a few only were to be seen below stairs; of these the "Chief" was fast asleep with the *Quarterly* on his knee, and a stray subaltern or two sat conning over the "Army List," and gazing in stupid wonder at their own names in print! And now we come to the Kennyfecks, at whose door a servant stands knocking for the second or third time. "Come in" is heard, and he enters.

The blinds are drawn, which adding to the gloom of the day, the vast apartment is in semi-darkness, and it is some time before you can descry the figures. On a sofa sits Mrs. Kennyfeck in a kind of travelling-dress, with her bonnet beside her; fragments of ribbons and stray articles of dress litter the sofa and the table, several trunks are strewn about, and a maid and a man are performing a *pas de deux* on an "imperial," which, in its efforts to close at the lock, is giving way simultaneously at the hinges. Miss Kennyfeck stands at the chimney burning notes and letters, of which, as she glances from time to time, her features betray the tenor; and lastly, Olivia is lying on a sofa, her face concealed between her hands, and only the quick palpitation of her bosom showing that her agitation is not lulled in slumber.

"What does he say? I can't hear him with all that stamping," said Mrs. Kennyfeck; and her voice was not of the dulcet order.

"He says the post-horses have come, Mamma; and wishes to know when he's to come round with the carriage."

"When I give orders for it; not till then," said she, imperiously; and the man, abashed in such a presence, departed.

"There, Pearse, leave it so; I cannot bear that noise any longer. Frances, you needn't wait; I'll send for you if I want you;" and the servants withdrew.

"He's at least two hours away, now," said she, addressing her eldest daughter.

"Very nearly. It wanted only a few minutes to eleven when Mr. Cashel sent for him."

"I hope, Caroline, that he will remember what is due, not to himself—I cannot say that—but to *me*, on this occasion. It is impossible that Cashel can avoid the acknowledgment of his attentions; nothing but your father's incompetence could permit of his escape."

"It's too late, Mamma — altogether too late. When Aunt Fanny——"

"Don't speak of her—don't even mention her name in my presence," cried Mrs. Kennyfeck, with an accent of bitter anguish.

"I was merely going to observe, Mamma, that her conduct has involved us in such ridicule, that reparation of the mischief is out of the question."

"I wish we were away; I cannot bear to stay another day here," said Olivia, with a deep sigh.

"If Aunt——"

"Don't call her your Aunt, Caroline; I forbid it; she is no sister of mine; she has been the evil genius of our family all her life long. But for her and her wiles I had never been married to your father! Just fancy what a position you might have had now, but for that cruel mishap."

The problem, to judge from Miss Kennyfeck's face, seemed difficult to solve; but she prudently held her peace.

"You may rest assured they know it all below stairs. That odious Lady Janet has told it in every dressing-room already."

"And Linton, Mamma," said Caroline, whose sisterly feelings were merged in most impartial justice—"only fancy Linton imitating Aunt Fanny's benediction with uplifted hands and eyes. I almost think I see him before me, and hear the insolent shouts of laughter on every side."

"Give me the aromatic vinegar!" cried Mrs. Kennyfeck, with an accent like suffocation.

"I think there's some one at the door. Come in," cried Miss Kennyfeck; and a very smartly-dressed groom entered with a note.

"Is there any answer to this?" said Mrs. Kennyfeck, listlessly, who thought it one of the habitual invitations to some excursion in a carriage or on horseback.

"Yes, my Lady," said the servant, bowing.

The title sounded pleasantly, and Mrs. K.'s features relaxed as she broke the seal.

Ah, Mrs. Kennyfeck, indolently and carelessly as you hold that small epistle in your fingers, it cost him who wrote it many a puzzling thought, and many a fair sheet of foolscap. Critics assure us that style is no criterion of the labour of composition, and that Johnson's rounded periods ran flippantly off the pen, while the seemingly careless sentences of Rousseau cost days and nights of toil. The note was from Sir Harvey Upton, and neither by its caligraphy nor grammar shed lustre on the literary genius of his corps. It went thus:

"My Dear Madam,—

"The beauty and fascinations of your daughters—but more especially of the second—have conspired to inspire me with sentiments of respectful admiration, which may speedily become something warmer should I obtain the gratifying sensation of your approbation.

"Family, fortune, and future expectations, will, I fancy, be found 'all right.'

"Part of the estate entailed on the baronetcy; encumbrances, a trifle. "I am, waiting your reply, dear Madam,

"Very respectfully yours,

"Harvey Upton,

"—— Hussars."

"Shall we write, Cary?" whispered Mrs. Kennyfeck, in the very faintest of tones.

"Better not, Mamma; a verbal 'happy to see Sir Harvey,' safer," was the answer.

Mrs. Kennyfeck yielded to the sager counsel, and the servant departed with the message.

"We may leave the matter entirely with Livy, Mamma," said her sister, half sarcastically; "I opine that innocence, upon the present occasion, will carry the day."

"I am glad of it," said Mrs. Kennyfeck; "I am fatigued and out of spirits: I'd rather not receive visitors."

"A white frock and a little sentiment—a sprig of jessamine and a bit of poetry!" said Miss K., as she arranged her hair at the glass; "only don't overdo it, Livy."

"I'd much rather you'd not go!" said Olivia, languidly.

"Of course, my dear; we are perfectly aware of that, but we have our duties also. Mamma must take care that Aunt Fanny does not

'give you away' before you're asked for; and I must see what the result of Papa's interview with Cashel may be, lest you should make a bad market while a good bid is being offered."

"Clever creature!" murmured Mrs. Kennyfeck, as she rose to leave the room.

"It will seem so odd, Mamma, that I'm to receive him, alone!"

"Not at all, Livy; we are packing up to go off: there are the trunks and cap-cases all strewn about. You can be engaged with Frances, and send her to summon us when Sir Harvey comes," said Miss Kennyfeck.

"Just so, my dear; and then you'll entreat of him to sit down—all as if you had heard nothing of his note; you'll be quite lively and natural in your manner."

"Ah, Mamma, remember what Talleyrand said to the Emperor: 'Give me the instructions, Sire, but leave the knavery to myself.' My sweet sister is quite diplomatic enough to re-echo it."

Livy looked reproachfully at her, but said nothing.

"If I discover, my dear, that the high prize is on your ticket, I'll wear a handkerchief round my neck. Without you see this emblem, don't discard your Baronet."

"Mamma, is this quite fair?" said Olivia. "Cary speaks as if my heart had no possible concern in the matter."

"Quite the reverse, my dear; but bear in mind that you have only one heart, and it would not be altogether discreet to give it away to two parties. Cary is always right, my love, in morals as in everything else!"

"And how am I to behave, Mamma," said Olivia, with more courage than before, "if I am neither to refuse nor accept Sir Harvey's proposals?"

"Did you never flirt, Livy dearest? Doesn't every partner with whom you dance twice of the same evening make advances that are neither repelled nor received? The silliest boarding-school miss that ever blushed before her Italian teacher knows how to treat such difficulties, if they deserve the name. But we are delaying too long. Mamma! to your post, while I, in the library, establish a strict blockade over Papa."

With these words Miss Kennyfeck waved her hand affectedly in adieu, and led her mother from the room; while Olivia, after a second's pause, arose and arrayed more smoothly the silky tresses of her hair before the glass.

We have once already, in this veracious narrative, been ungallant enough to peep at this young lady, and coolly watch her strategy before the enemy. We will not repeat the offence, nor linger to mark how, as she walked the room, she stopped from time to time before the mirror to gaze on charms which expectancy had already

heightened; in fact, we will quit the chamber with Mrs. Kennyfeck and her elder daughter, and as the choice is permitted which to follow, we select the latter.

"Here's Miss Kennyfeck, by Jove!" cried Jennings, as she crossed the hall. "We have all been dying to see you; pray come here and give us your counsel." And he led her into a small drawing-room, where, around a table covered with prints and coloured drawings of costume, a considerable number of the guests were assembled.

"For mercy sake, nothing out of the 'Waverley Novels!'" said the blonde lady. "I am wearied of seeing the Jewess Rebecca wherever I go."

"Well, I'll be Diana Vernon, I know that," said Miss Meek; "you may all choose how you please."

"But you can't be, my love, if we have the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,'" said Mrs. White.

"Why can't I, if Charley takes Osbaldiston?" said she.

"Because they are not characters of the piece."

"Nobody cares for character in a masquerade!" said Linton.

"Or if they have any, they put a mask over it," said Lady Janet.

"I vote that we are all Tyrolese peasanths," lisped the fat and dumpy Mrs. Malone. "It's a most picthuresque costhume."

"What will you be, Sir Andrew?" cried another, as the old General passed the door in a dog-trot, with Flint behind him.

"By me saul! I thenk I'll be 'the Wanderin' Jew!'" cried he, wiping the perspiration off his forehead.

"You hear that, Lady Janet?" said Linton, roguishly. "Sir Andrew intends to live for ever."

"So that I don't, Sir, I can't complain," said she, with a tartness quite electric.

"I incline to leave the choice of each free," said Miss Kennyfeck, as she tossed over the drawings. "When you select a story, there are always a certain number of characters nobody likes to take."

"I'll be Henri Quatre," said an Infantry Captain. "I wish you'd be Gabrielle, Miss Kennyfeck?"

"Thanks; but I've a fancy for that Cephalonian costume."

"Egad! you can always pick up a 'Greek' or two, here, to keep you company," said a Hussar; but no one joined his laugh.

"I'll be Don Belianis!" said a tall, melancholy Subaltern.

"What were you at Bellingden's last year, Fillymore?"

"I went as 'Chiffney;' but they turned me out. The whole was mediæval, and they said I was all wrong."

"Try that turban, my dear Miss Kennyfeck," said Mrs. White, who, suspecting the young lady wore false ringlets, made a vigorous effort to expose the cheat.

"By Jove! how becoming!" exclaimed Jennings. "Now, put

on the mantle—not over the right shoulder, but so—crossed a little."

"You ought to have this scarf round your neck," said another; "blue and gold have such an excellent effect."

"I vote for your wearing that," said the Hussar, quite smitten with her beauty. "What do they call the dress?"

"Costume of Leopoldine of Eschingen, who defended the 'Iron-gate' against the Turks, in 1662."

"Where was that?" asked one.

"In somebody's avenue, I suppose," lisped out the tall Sub.

"No, no; it's on some river or other. There's a cataract they call the Irongate—I forget where."

"The Lethe, perhaps," said Miss Kennyfeck, slyly.

"Is not that a pace!—by Jove! Cashel's in a hurry. This way," said Jennings; and they all rushed to the window in time to see Roland flit past at a full gallop.

Miss Kennyfeck did not wait for more; but, throwing off the turban and mantle, hastened out to catch her father, who, at the same instant, was issuing from the library.

"Now, Pa," said she, slipping her arm within his, "how is it to be? Pray, now, don't affect the mysterious, but say at once—has he proposed?"

"Who? has who proposed?"

"Mr. Cashel, of course. How could I mean any other?"

"For you, my dear?" said he, for once venturing upon a bit of raillery.

"Pshaw, Pa; for Olivia!"

"Nothing of the kind, my dear. Such a subject has never been alluded to between us."

"Poor thing! she has been badly treated then, that's all! It would, however, have saved us all a world of misconception if you had only said so at first; you must own that."

"But you forget, Miss Kennyfeck, that I never supposed you entertained this impression. Mr. Cashel's conversation with me related exclusively to the affairs of his property."

"Poor Livy!" said Miss Kennyfeck, letting go his arm and ascending the stairs. As Miss Kennyfeck drew near the door of the drawing-room, she began to sing sufficiently loud to be heard by those within, and thus, judiciously heralding her approach, she opened the door and entered. Sir Harvey had been standing beside the chimney-piece with Olivia, but turned hastily round, his countenance exhibiting that state of mingled doubt, fear, and satisfaction, which vouched for the cleverness of the young lady's tactics. Nothing, in truth, could have been more adroit than her management; performing a feat which among naval men is known as "backing and filling,"

she succeeded in manœuvring for nigh an hour, without ever advancing or retiring. We should be unwilling to deny our reader the value of a lesson, did we not feel how the fairer portion of our audience would weary over a recital, in every detail of which they could instruct our ignorance.

The late Lord Londonderry was famed for being able to occupy "the House" for any given time without ever communicating a fact, raising a question, solving a difficulty, or, what is harder than all, committing *himself*. But how humbly does this dexterity appear beside the young-lady-like tact, that, opposed by all the importunity of a lover, can play the game in such wise, that after fifty-odd minutes the "pieces" should stand upon the board precisely as they did at the beginning!

"How do you, Sir Harvey? Why are you not on that Committee of Costume in the little drawing-room, where the great question at issue is between the time of the Crusades and the Swell Mob?"

"I have been far more agreeably occupied, in a manner that my feelings"—(here Olivia looked disappointed)—"my heart, I mean," said he—(and the young lady looked dignified)—"my feelings and my heart, too," resumed he, horribly puzzled which tack to sail upon, "assure me must nearly concern my future happiness."

"How pleasant!" said Cary, laughingly, as if she accepted the speech as some high-flown compliment; "you are so fortunate to know what to do on a dreary wet day like this."

Olivia, whose eyes were bent upon her sister, changed colour more than once. "The signal was flying"—"stop firing," just at the moment when the enemy had all but "struck;" in less figurative phrase, Miss Kennyfeck's throat was encircled by the scarf which she had forgotten to lay aside on leaving the drawing-room.

The object was too remarkable to escape notice, and Olivia's face grew scarlet as she thought of her triumph. Miss Kennyfeck saw this, but attributed the agitation to anything but its true cause.

"I'm in search of Mamma," said she; and with a very peculiar glance at Olivia, left the room.

Sir Harvey's visit lasted full twenty minutes longer, and although no record has been preserved of what passed on the occasion, they who met him descending the stairs all agreed in describing his appearance as most gloomy and despondent. As for Olivia, she saw the door close after him with a something very like sorrow. There was no love in the case, nor anything within a day's journey of it; but he was good-looking, fashionable, well-mannered, and mustachioed. She would have been "My Lady," too; and though this is but a "brevet nobility" after all, it has all "the sound of the true metal." She thought over all these things; and she thought, besides, how very sad he looked when she said "No;" and, how much sadder,

when asking the usual question about "Time, and proved devotion, and all that sort of thing," she said "No" again; and how, saddest of all, when she made the stereotyped little speech about "sisterly affection, and seeing him happy with another!" Oh dear! oh dear! is it not very wearisome and depressing to think that chess can have some hundred thousand combinations, and love-making but its two or three "gambits"—the "fool's-mate" the chief of them? We have said she was sorry for what had occurred; but she consoled herself by remembering, it was not her fault that Sir Harvey was not as rich as Cashel, and, nephew to a live uncle!

As Sir Harvey's "Lady"—Heaven forgive me, I had almost written "Wife"—she would have been the envy of a very large circle of her Dublin acquaintance; and then she knew that these Dragoon people have a way of making their money go so much further than civilians; and in all that regards horses, equipage, and outward show, the smartest "mufti" is a seedy affair beside the frogs of the new regulation pelisse! She actually began to feel misgivings about her choice.

A high drag at the Howth races, a crowd of whiskered fellows of "ours," and the band of the regiment in Merrion-square, came home to her "dear Dublin" imagination with irresistible fascination. In her mind's eye, she had already cut the "Bar," and been coldly distant with the Infantry. It was a little reverie of small triumphs, but the sum of them mounted up to something considerable.

"Is he gone, Livy?" said Cary, as, entering noiselessly, she stole behind her sister's chair.

"Yes, dear, he is gone!" said she, sighing slightly.

"My poor forlorn damsel, don't take his absence so much to heart! "You're certain to see him at dinner!"

"He said he'd leave this afternoon," said she, gravely; "that he couldn't bear to meet me after what had passed."

"And what has passed, child?"

"You know, of course, Cary; I refused him!"

"Refused him!—refused him!—what possessed you to do so?"

"This!" said Olivia, gasping with terror at the unknown danger; and she caught hold of the fringe of her sister's scarf.

Miss Kennyfeck started, and put her hand to her neck, and suddenly letting it fall again, she leaned against the wall for support.

"This was a mistake, Livy," said she, in a voice barely above a whisper; "I was trying on some costumes below stairs, and they tied this round my neck, where I utterly forgot it."

"And there is nothing——" She could not go on, but hanging her head, burst into tears.

"My poor dear Livy, don't give way so; the fault, I know, was all mine. Let me try if I cannot repair it. Have you positively refused him?"

She nodded, but could not speak.

"Did you say that there was no hope—that your sentiments could never change?"

"I did."

"Come, that's not so bad; men never believe that. You didn't say that your affections were engaged?"

"No."

"There's a dear child," said she, kissing her neck; "I knew you'd not be guilty of such folly. And how did you part, Livy—coldly, or in affectionate sorrow?"

"Coldly; we did not shake hands."

"That's right; all as it ought to be. It is a sad blunder, but I hope not irreparable. Cheer up, child; depend upon it *my* scarf is not so fatal as Aunt Fanny's blessing."

"Ah, then, my dear, I don't see much difference in the end," said that redoubtable lady herself, who issued from a small conservatory off the drawing-room, where she had lain in wait for the last half hour. "I heard it, my dears, and a nice hash you made of it between you, with your signals and telescopes"—we believe she meant telegraphs—"you threw out the dirty water, now, in earnest!" And so saying, she proceeded to disentangle herself from a prickly creeper, which had a most pertinacious hold of what Linton called her "scalp-lock."

"Aunt Fanny's blessing, indeed!" said she, for her temper knew no bounds when she saw the enemy silenced. "'Tis little harm that would have done, if ye didn't take to screaming about it; as if any man could bear that! You drove him away, my dear, just the way your own mother did poor Major Cohlhayne—with hard crying—till he said 'he'd as soon go to a wake as take tay in the house.' And sure enough she had to take up with your poor father, after! Just so. I never knew luck come of signals and signs. When the good thing's before you, help yourself. My poor father used to say, 'Don't pass "the spirits" because there's claret at the head of the table; who knows if it'll ever come down to you?' And there you are, now! and glad enough you'd be to take that curate I saw in Dublin with the smooth face! this minute. I don't blame you, as much as your poor foolish mother. She has you, as she reared you. Bad luck to you for a plant!" cried she, as the ingenious creeper insinuated itself among the meshes of her Limerick lace collar. "Cary, just take this out for me;" but Cary was gone, and her sister with her. Nor did Aunt Fanny know how long her eloquence had been purely soliloquy.

She looked around her for a moment at the deserted battle-field, and then slowly retired.

CHAPTER XVI.

"No" is the feminine of "Yes!"
HUNGARIAN PROVERB.

BAD as the weather is—and certainly even in Ireland a more drenching, driving-down, pouring rain never fell—we must ask of our readers to follow Cashel, who at a slapping gallop rode on, over grass and tillage, now, careering lightly over the smooth sward, now, sweltering along heavily through deep ground, regardless of the pelting storm, and scarcely noticing the strong fences which, at every instant, tried the stride and strength of his noble horse.

If his speed was headlong, his seat was easy, and his hand as steady as if lounging along some public promenade; his features, however, were flushed, partly from the beating rain, but more from a feverish excitement that showed itself in his flashing eye and closely compressed lip. More than once, in crossing a difficult leap, his horse nearly fell, and although half on the ground, and only recovering by a scramble, he seemed not to heed the accident. At last he arrived at the tall oak paling which fenced the grounds of the cottage, and where it was his wont to halt and fasten his horse. Now, however, he rode fiercely at it, clearing the high leap with a tremendous spring, and alighting on the trimly-kept grass-plat before the door.

A slight faint shriek was heard as the horse dashed past the window, and, pale with terror, Mary Leicester stood in the porch.

Cashel had meanwhile dismounted, and given his horse to the old gardener.

"Not hurt, Mr. Cashel?" said she, trying to seem composed, while she trembled in every limb.

"Not in the least. I never intended to have alarmed you, however."

"Then it was no run-away?" said she, essaying a smile.

"I'm ashamed to say I have not that excuse for so rudely trampling over your neat sward. Will Mr. Corrigan forgive me?"

"Of course he will, if he even ever knows that he has anything to forgive; but it so happens, that he has gone into the village to-day —an excursion he has not made for nigh a year. He wished to consult our friend the Doctor on some matter of importance, and I half suspect he may have stayed to share his dinner."

As Miss Leicester continued to make this explanation, they had reached the drawing-room, which, to Cashel's amazement, exhibited tokens of intended departure. Patches here and there on the walls

showed where pictures had stood. The book-shelves were empty, the tables displayed none of those little trifling objects which denote daily life and its occupations, and his eye wandered over the sad-looking scene till it came back to her, as she stood reading his glances, and seeming to re-echo the sentiment they conveyed.

"All this would seem to speak of leave-taking," said Cashel, in a voice that agitation made thick and guttural.

"It is so," said she, with a sigh; "we are going away."

"Going away!" Simple as the words are, we have no sadder sounds in our language. They have the sorrowful cadence that bespeaks desertion. They ring through the heart like a knell over long-past happiness. They are the requiem over "friends no more," and of times that never can come back again.

"Going away!" How dreary does it sound; as if life had no fixed destination in future, but that we were to drift over its bleak ocean, the "waifs" of what we once had been.

"Going away!" cried Cashel; "but surely you have not heard——" He stopped himself; another word, and his secret had been revealed —the secret he had so imperatively enjoined Tiernay to keep; for it was his intention to have left Ireland for ever ere Mr. Corrigan should have learned the debt of gratitude he owed him. It is true, indeed, that one night of sleepless reflection had suggested another counsel, but had not altered his desire that the mystery should be preserved.

He was confused, therefore, at the peril he had so narrowly escaped, and for a moment was silent; at length he resumed, in a tone of assumed ease:

"'Going away!' sounds to one like me, who have lived a life of wandering, so like pleasure, that I always associate it with new scenes of enjoyment; I think all the sorrow is reserved for those who remain behind—the deserted."

"So it may," said she, "with those who, like yourself, have roamed the world in the excitement of ardent youth, glorying in enterprise, thirsting for adventure; but there are others, ourselves, for instance, whose humble fortunes have linked them with one class of scenes and objects till they have grown part of our very natures; so that we only know the world as it is associated with things familiar to daily use. There are, doubtless, plants of more gorgeous foliage and fairer flowers in other countries, but *we* shall never learn to look at them as we do upon these that speak to us of home, of spring and summer, when they gladdened *us*, of autumn and winter, when our culture cared for *them*. There are sunsets more rich and glowing, but if we see them, it will be to think of that sinking orb which sent its last rays over that wide river, and lit up in a golden glory this little chamber. There's not a charm the fairest clime can own but will

have its highest merit in recalling some humble scene that tells of 'home.'"

"I never could leave a spot so dear to me as this were!" cried Cashel, who watched with ecstasy the impassioned beauty of her features.

"Do not say *that*," said she, seriously. "We can all of us do what we ought, however it may try our courage. Yes, I say courage," said she, smiling, "since I fancy it is a property you have a due respect for. If we leave scenes so dear to us as these, it is because we feel it a duty; and a duty fulfilled is a buckler against most sorrows. But we are wandering into a very sad theme—at least, to judge from your grave looks. What news have you of your gay company?"

"I see but little of them," said Cashel, abruptly.

"What a strange host!—and how do they amuse themselves?"

"As they fancy, I believe. I only know I never interfere with them, and they are kind enough to reciprocate the civility; and so we get on admirably."

"I must say this scarcely speaks well for either party," said she, laughing.

"I fear not; but it is true, notwithstanding."

"You have a most accomplished friend, I believe?"

"Linton. Do you mean Linton?"

"Yes. He must be an excellent counsellor in all difficulties."

Cashel did not look as if he concurred in the sentiment, but he said nothing; and Mary, half fearing that she had unwittingly given pain, was silent also. She was the first to speak.

"Do you know, Mr. Cashel, how I passed the morning? You'd scarcely guess. It was in writing a long letter; so long, indeed, that I began to fear, like many efforts of over-zeal, it might defeat itself, and never get read; and that letter was—to *you*."

"To *me!* where is it, then?"

"There!" said she, pointing to some charred leaves beneath the grate. "I see your curiosity, and I have no pretension to trifle with it. But last night, late, Papa dictated to me a long sermon on your account, premising that the impertinence was from one you should never see again, and one who, however indiscreet in his friendship, was assuredly sincere in it. Were the document in existence, I should probably not have to utter so many apologies; for, on the whole, it was very flattering to you."

"And why is it not so?" cried Cashel, eagerly.

"I cannot tell you why."

"Do you mean that you do not wish to tell, or do not know the reason?"

"I do not know the reason," said she, firmly. "I was ill, slightly ill, this morning, and could not breakfast with Papa. It was late

when I arose, and he was on the very brink of starting for Dunkeeran; he seemed agitated and excited, and, after a few words of inquiry about my health, he said:

"'That letter, Mary, have you written it? Well, burn it. Throw it into the fire, at once.'

"I did so; but I cannot conceal from you the deep interest he has taken in your fortunes—a feeling which the dread of offending has possibly sentenced him to cherish in secret. At least, so I read his change of intention."

"I had hoped he knew me better," said Cashel, in whose voice a feeling of disappointment might be traced. "It is the misfortune of men like myself to make the most unfavourable impression, where alone they are anxious for the opposite. Now, it may seem very uncourteous, but I am less than indifferent what the fair company yonder think of me; and yet, I would give much to stand high in Mr. Corrigan's esteem."

"And you do so, believe me," cried she, her eagerness moved by the evident despondency of his manner; "he speaks of you with all the interest of a father."

"Do not say so," cried Cashel, in a voice tremulous with anxiety; "do not say so, if you mean not to encourage hopes I scarcely dare to cherish."

His look and manner, even more than his words, startled her; and she stared at him, uncertain what reply to make.

"I never knew a father, nor have I ever tasted a mother's affection. I have been one of whom Fortune makes a plaything, as if to show how much worldly prosperity can consort with a desolate condition, and a heart for which none have sympathy. I had hoped, however, to attach others to me. I had joined in pursuits that were not mine, to endeavour to render myself companionable. I fell in with habits that were uncongenial, and tastes that I ever disliked; but without success. I might be 'the dupe,' but never 'the friend.' I could have borne much—I did bear much—to win something that resembled cordiality and esteem; but all in vain! When I lived the wild life of a Columbian sailor, I deemed that such men as I now associate with must be the very types of chivalry, and I longed to be of them and among them. Still, the reproach lies not at their door. *They*, stepped not out of their sphere to act a part—*I*, did; mine was all the sycophancy of imitation. The miserable cant of fashion formed all my code. But for this, I might have won good men's esteem—but for this, I might have learned what duties attach to fortune and station such as mine; and now I see the only one, from whom I hoped to gain the knowledge, about to leave me!"

"This despondency is ill-judging and unfair," said Mary, in a kind tone. "You did, perhaps, choose your friends unwisely, but

you judge them unjustly too. *They*, never dreamed of friendship in their intercourse with you; *they*, only thought of that companionship which men of the same age and fortune expect to meet in each other. If less worldly-wise, or more generous than themselves, they deemed that they once had paid for their skill and cleverness; and so should *you*. Remember, that you put a value upon their intimacy which it never laid claim to, and that *they* were less false than were *you* self-deceived."

"Be it so," said Cashel, hastily. "I care little where the delusion began. I meant honestly, and if they played not on the square with me, the fault be theirs; but that is not what I would speak of, nor what brought me here to-day. I came to throw my last stake for happiness." He paused, and took her hand in his. "I came," said he—and his lips trembled as he spoke—"I came, to ask you to be my wife!"

Mary withdrew her hand, which he had scarcely dared to press, and leaned upon the chimney-piece without speaking. It rarely happens that such an announcement is made to a young lady quite unexpectedly; such was, however, the case here: for nothing was she less prepared! Cashel, it is true, had long ceased to be indifferent to her; the evenings of his visits at the cottage were sure to be her very happiest; his absences made dreary blanks. The inartificial traits of his character had at first inspired interest; his generous nature, and his manly leaning to right, had created esteem of him. There were passages of romantic interest in his former life which seemed so well to suit his bold and dashing independence; and there was also an implicit deference, an almost humility, in the obedience he tendered to her grandfather, which spoke much for one whom sudden wealth and prosperity might be supposed to have corrupted. Yet, all this while, had she never thought of what impression she herself was making.

"I have but one duty," said she at last, in a faint whisper.

"Might I not share it with you, Mary?" said he, again taking her hand between his own; "you would not grudge me some part of his affection?"

"Who crossed the window there?" cried she, starting; "did you not see a figure pass?"

"No, I saw no one—I thought of none save you."

"I am too much frightened to speak. I saw some one stop before the window and make a gesture, as if threatening—I saw it in the glass."

Cashel immediately hurried from the room, and passing out, searched through the shrubberies on either side of the cottage, but without success. On examining closely, however, he could detect the trace of recent footsteps on the wet grass, but lost the direction

on the gravel-walk; and it was in a frame of mind far from tranquil that he re-enterd the room.

"You saw no one?" said she eagerly.

"Not one."

"Nor any appearance of footsteps?"

"Yes, I did, or fancied I did, detect such before the window; but why should this alarm you, or turn your mind from what we spoke of? Let me once more——"

"Not now—not now, I beg of you; a secret misgiving is over me, and I am not generally a coward; but I have not collectedness to speak to you as I ought. I would not wish to be unkind, nor would I yet deceive you. This cannot be."

"Cannot be, Mary?"

"Do not ask me more now. You are too generous to give pain; spare me, then, the suffering of inflicting it on you. I will tell you my reasons; you shall own them to be sufficient."

"When are we to meet again?" said Roland, as he moved slowly towards the door.

"There it is again!" cried she, in a voice of actual terror; and Cashel opened the window and sprang out; but even the slight delay in unfastening the sash prevented his overtaking the intruder, whoever he might be, while, in the abundance of evergeens about, search was certain to prove fruitless.

"Good-by," said she, endeavouring to smile; "you are too proud and high of spirit, if I read you aright, to return ever to a theme like this."

"I am humble enough to sue it out—a very suppliant," said he, passionately.

"I thought otherwise of you," said she, affecting a look of disappointment.

"Think of me how you will, so that you know I love you," cried he, pressing his lips to her hand; and then, half-maddened by the conflict in his mind, he hastened out, and mounting his horse, rode off; not, indeed, at the mad speed of his coming, but slowly, and with bent-down head.

Let a man be ever so little of a coxcomb, the chances are that he will always explain a refusal of this kind on any ground rather than upon that of his own unworthiness. It is either a case "of pre-engaged affection," or some secret influence on the score of family and fortune, and even this sophistry lends its balm to wounded self-love. Cashel, unhappily for his peace of mind, had not studied in this school, and went his way in deep despondency. Like many men who indulge but seldom in self-examination, he never knew how much his affections were involved till his proffer of them was refused. Now, for the first time, he felt that; now recognised what store he placed

on her esteem, and how naturally he had turned from the wearisome dissipations of his own house to the cheerful happiness of "the cottage." Neither could he divest himself of the thought, that had Mary known him in his early and his only true character, she might not have refused him, and that he owed his failure to that mongrel thing which wealth had made him.

"I never was intended for this kind of life," thought he. "I am driven to absurdities and extravagancies to give it any character of interest in my eyes, and then I feel ashamed of such triviality. To live among the rich, a man should be born among them—should have the habits, the tastes, and the traditions. These are to be imbibed from infancy, but not acquired in manhood—at least, I will not begin the study."

He turned homeward, still slowly. The bell was ringing which called the guests to dress for dinner as he reached a large open lawn before the house, and for a moment he halted, muttering to himself, "How would it be now, were I to turn my horse's head and never re-enter that house? How many are there, of all my 'dear friends,' who would ever ask what befel me?"

Arrived at the door, he passed up-stairs to his dressing-room, upon a table of which he perceived a very small note, sealed with Lady Kilgoff's initials. It was written in pencil, and merely contained one line—"Come over to me, before dinner, for one minute.—L. K."

He had not seen her since the day before, when he had in vain sought to overtake her in the wood; and her absence from the dinner-table had seemed to him in pique at his breach of engagement. Was this an endeavour, then, to revive that strange relationship between them, which took every form save love-making, but was all the more dangerous on that account? Or, was it merely to take up some common-place plan of amusement and pleasure—that mock importance given to trifles which as frequently makes them cease to be trifles?

Half careless as to what the invitation portended, and still pondering over his failure, he reached her door and knocked.

"Come in," said she; and he entered.

Dressed for dinner with unusual taste and splendour, he had never seen her look so beautiful. For some time back she had observed an almost studied simplicity of dress, rarely wearing an ornament, and distinguishing herself rather by a half Puritanism of style. The sudden change to all the blaze of diamonds and the softening influence of deep folds of lace, gave a brilliancy to her appearance quite magical; nor was Cashel's breeding proof against a stare of amazement and admiration.

A deeper flush on her cheek acknowledged how she felt his confusion, and hastening to relieve it, she said,

"I have but a moment to speak to you. It is almost seven o'clock. You were at 'the cottage' to-day?"

"Yes," said Roland, his cheek growing scarlet as he spoke.

"And, doubtless, your visit had some object of importance. Nay, no confessions. This is not curiosity on my part, but to let you know that you were followed. Scarcely had you left this, when Linton set out also, making a circuit by the wood, but at a speed which must have soon overtaken you. He returned some time before you, at the same speed, and entered by the back gate of the stables. From this window I could see him each time."

"Indeed!" said Roland, remembering the figure Mary had seen before the window.

"You know my opinion of this man already. He never moves without a plan; and a plan, with him, is ever a treachery."

"He avoids me strangely; we rarely meet now; never by any chance alone. And even before others there is a forced gaiety in his manner, that all his artifice cannot pass off for real."

"Have you thwarted him in anything?"

"Not that I know of."

"Have you refused him any favour that he sought for?"

"Never."

"Is he your debtor for what he ought, but never means, to pay?"

"Not even that. What I may have given him has been always without any reserve or thought of restitution."

"Are your affections directed towards the same object?"

As she said this, the ease in which she commenced gradually left her, and her cheek grew flushed ere she finished.

"I cannot tell. There are no confidences between us; besides, a very bankrupt in love could not envy my solvency. Mine is a heart that cannot threaten dangerous rivalry."

"You cannot be certain of that!" said she, as if thinking aloud.

Fortunately, Cashel did not hear the words, but stood in deep reverie for some seconds.

"There! the second bell has rung; I must leave you. My Lord comes down to dinner to-day. It is by his orders that I am thus showily dressed. Linton has been filling his mind with stories of some Embassy he is to have, and we are already rehearsing 'our Excellencies!' I have but time to say, Be on your guard; Linton is no common enemy; nor does it need an injury to make him one."

"It is very rude of me, I know, to interrupt so interesting a *tête-à-tête*, but Mr. Cashel's cook has feelings also at stake."

These words were spoken by Lord Kilgoff, who, in a tone of no small irritation, now joined them.

"I was speaking of your mission, my Lord."

"Which you forgot, of course, was not to be mentioned—even to so sincere a well-wisher as Mr. Cashel."

"In any case, my Lord, it remains safe in my keeping."

"Very possibly, Sir; but, it is a poor earnest Lady Kilgoff gives of her fitness as the wife of a 'Diplomatist.'"

Cashel gave his arm to Lady Kilgoff without speaking, and his Lordship followed them slowly towards the dining-room. Linton stood at the door as they entered, and his wan features grew flushed as the haughty beauty moved past him with the very coldest of recognitions.

"What an admirable taste is your Lordship's!" said he to the old Peer; "Lady Kilgoff's diamonds are disposed with an elegance that bespeaks the guiding skill of a consummate artist."

"Ha! you perceive it, then!" said he, smiling. "I own to you, the festooning the robe with bouquets of brilliants was a fancy of mine, and has, I think, a very pretty effect."

"Storr told me that he had not one person in his employment could equal your Lordship in the harmonious arrangement of gems. He mentioned a bracelet, if I remember aright, made from your own designs, as the most beautifully chaste ornament he had ever seen."

"You must pronounce for yourself, Sir," said the old Lord, with a smile of elated vanity; and so, taking Linton's arm, he approached where Lady Kilgoff was seated in a group of ladies.

"Will you oblige me, Madam," said he, with a courteous bow, "by showing Mr. Linton your ruby and opal bracelet, which I had the poor merit of designing?"

"I am unfortunate enough not to have it here," replied she, with a confusion which made the blood mount to her temples.

"I am grieved, Madam, it should not enjoy the honour of your preference," said Lord Kilgoff, with an air of pique. "Will you order your maid to fetch it?"

"I've not got it, my Lord," said she, colouring still deeper.

"Not got it, Madam! you do not mean to imply——"

"Only that it is slightly broken—a few stones have fallen out, and I have sent it to be repaired."

"To be repaired, Madam! and without my knowledge! To whom, pray?"

"That man in Dublin; I forget his name."

"Your Ladyship means Leonard, I presume," interposed Linton, with an air of courtesy, while, plainer than any words, his glance said, "My revenge is coming!"

"Leonard!" exclaimed Lord Kilgoff, with a look of horror. "Give Leonard that bracelet! the mould of which I refused to the Princess of Hohenhöffingen, and which I made Storr destroy in my own presence!"

"You perceive, my Lord," cried Lady Janet, "her Ladyship is less exclusive than you are."

"And generous enough to admire what may belong to another," added Linton, but in a tone only audible by Lady Kilgoff.

"We have got a few minutes before dinner, Madam. I must beg you will employ them in writing to Mr. Leonard to return the bracelet at once. Say it was a mistake on your part—an inadvertence—and done without my knowledge. Caution the man, too, about appropriating any portion of the design, and remind him that articles of *vertù* are protected by the act of copyright."

"We had better delay the postboy, my Lord," said Linton; "he starts at seven precisely."

"Do so, Sir."

"Dinner!" cried the butler, flinging wide the folding-doors.

"Could we delay that pleasant summons a few minutes, Mr. Cashel?" said Lord Kilgoff.

"It will not be necessary on my account, Sir; I'll write to-morrow." And this she said with an air of haughty defiance that never failed to subdue the old Peer's petulance; and then, accepting Cashel's arm, moved on without a word.

"Where is it? that's the question!" whispered Mrs. White to Lady Janet.

"Take you two to one it's not at Leonard's," said Frobisher.

"Give you an even fifty Linton knows all about it," replied Upton.

"And ten to two that he'll never tell!" chimed in Miss Meek; and so they took their places at the table.

CHAPTER XVII.

I could an I would, Sir Harry.
OLD PLAY.

WHILE the gay company at Tubbermore dined sumptuously, and enjoyed the luxuries of a splendid table with no other alloy to their pleasure than the *ennui* of people whose fastidiousness has grown into malady, Mr. Corrigan sat in council at the cottage with his ancient ally, the Doctor. There was an appearance of constraint over each—very unusual with men who had been friends from boyhood; and in their long pauses, and short, abrupt sentences, might be read the absence of that confiding spirit which had bound them so many years like brothers.

It may be in the reader's recollection that, while Corrigan was pledged to secrecy by Linton respecting his revelations of Cashel,

Tiernay was equally bound by Roland not to divulge any of his plans for the old man's benefit. Perhaps it was the first time in the life of either that such a reserve had been practised. Certainly, it weighed heavily upon both; and more than once they were coming to the fatal resolve to break their vows, and then some sudden thought—some unknown dread of disconcerting the intentions of those who trusted them—would cross their mind, and after a momentary struggle, a half cough, and muttered "Well! well!" they would relapse into silence, each far too occupied by himself to note the other's embarrassment.

It was after a long time and much thought that Corrigan perceived, however pledged to Linton not to speak of Cashel's conduct respecting the cottage, that he was in no wise bound to secrecy regarding the proposal for Mary Leicester's hand; and this was, indeed, the topic on which he was most desirous of the Doctor's counsel.

"I have a secret for you, Tiernay," said the old man, at length; "and it is one which will surprise you. I have had an offer this morning for Mary! Ay; just so. You often told me that nothing but this life of isolation and retirement would have left her with me so long; but the thought of losing her—the tangible, actual dread—never presented itself before this day!"

"Who is it?" said Tiernay, shortly, but not without evident agitation of manner.

"One who has never enjoyed much of your favour, Tiernay, and whom I suspect you have judged with less than your habitual fairness."

"I know the man. Linton?"

"It was Linton."

"And he actually made this proposition?" said Tiernay, with an expression of the most unbounded surprise in his features.

"To me, myself, in this room, he made it."

"He asked you what her fortune would be?" said Tiernay, gruffly.

"He did not; he told me of his own. He said, that by a recent event he had become possessed of sufficient property to make him indifferent to the fortune of whoever he might marry. He spoke sensibly and well of his future career, of the plans he had conceived, and the rules he made for his own guidance; he spoke warmly of her with whom he wished to share his fortunes; and lastly, he alluded in kind terms to myself, dependent as I am upon her care, and living as I do upon her affection. In a word, if there was not the ardour of a passionate lover, there was what I augur better from—the sentiments of one who had long reflected on his own position in life, who knew the world well, and could be no mean guide amid its dangers and difficulties."

"Have you told Mary of this?"

"I have not. My answer to Linton was: 'Let me have time to think over this proposal; give me some hours of thought before I even speak to my granddaughter;' and he acceded at once."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Tiernay, rising and pacing the room. "How inadequate are we two old men—removed from intercourse with the world, neither players nor lookers-on at the game of life—to cope with one like him, and see what he purposes to himself by this alliance! As for his affection, as for his power to feel her worth, to estimate the gentle virtues of her spotless nature, I cannot, I will not believe it."

"And for that very reason are you unfit to judge him. Your prejudices, ever against him, are rendered stronger, because you cannot divine motives black enough to suit your theory; you give the benefit of all your doubts against himself."

"I know him to be a gambler in its worst sense. Not one who plays even for the gratification of those alternating vacillations of hope and fear which jaded, worn-out natures resort to as the recompense for blunted emotions and blasted ambitions, but a gambler for gain!—that foul amalgam of the miser and the knave. I've seen him play the sycophant, too, like one who studied long his part, and knew it thoroughly. No, no, Con, it is not one like this must be husband of Mary!"

"I tell you again, Tiernay, you suffer your prejudices to outrun all your prudence. The very fact that he asks in marriage a portionless girl, without influence from family, and without the advantage of station, should outweigh all your doubts twice told."

"This does but puzzle me—nothing more," said Tiernay, doggedly. "Were it Cashel, that high-hearted, generous youth, who made this offer——"

"I must stop you, Tiernay; you are as much at fault in your overestimate of *one*, as in your disparagement of the *other*. Cashel is not what you deem him. Ask me not how I know it. I cannot—I dare not tell you; it is enough that I do know it, and know it by the evidence of my own eyes."

"Then they have deceived you, that's all," said Tiernay, roughly; "for I tell you, and I speak now of what my own knowledge can sustain, that he is the very soul of generosity—a generosity that would imply recklessness, if not guided by the shrinking delicacy of an almost girlish spirit."

"Tiernay, Tiernay, you are wrong, I say," cried Corrigan, passionately.

"And *I* say it is *you* who are in error," said Tiernay. "It was but this morning I held in my hands——" He stopped, stammered, and was silent——

"Well," cried Corrigan, "go on; not that, indeed, you could convince me against what my eyes have assured, for here, upon this table, I beheld——"

"Out with it, man! Tell what jugglery has been practised on you, for I see you have been duped."

"Hush! here's Mary!" cried Corrigan, who, scarcely able to control himself, now walked the room in great agitation.

"You were talking so loud," said Mary, "that I guessed you were quarrelling about politics, and so I came to make peace."

"We were not, Mary; but Tiernay is in one of his wrong-head humours."

"And your grandfather in the silliest of his foolish ones!" exclaimed Tiernay, as, snatching up his hat, he left the cottage.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Like battle trumps
The chaos of their tongues did drown reflection.
OSWALD.

It might be thought that in a household so full of contrarieties as Tubbermore, any new plan of pleasure would have met but a meagre success. Here, were the Kilgoffs, upon one side, full of some secret importance, and already speaking of the uncertainty of passing the spring in Ireland. There, were the Kennyfecks, utterly disorganised by intestine troubles—mother, aunt, and daughters at open war, and only of one mind for some few minutes of each day, when they assailed the luckless Kennyfeck as the "author of all evil;" Frobisher, discontented that no handicap could be "got up," to remunerate him for the weariness of his exile; Upton, suffering under the pangs of rejection; Sir Andrew, reduced to a skeleton by the treatment against his unhappy opiate, being condemned, as "Jim" phrased it, to "two heavy sweats without body-clothes, and a drench every day;" Meek grown peevish at the little prospect of making anything of Cashel politically; and Cashel himself hipped and bored by all in turn, and wearied of being the head of a house where the only pleasantry existed in the servants' hall—and they were all rogues and thieves who made it.

It might be easily supposed these were not the ingredients which would amalgamate into any agreeable union, and that even a suggestion to that end would meet but few supporters.

Not so; the very thought of doing "anything" was a relief: each felt, perhaps, his share of shame at the general *ennui*, and longed for

whatever gave a chance of repelling it. It was as in certain political conditions in seasons of general stagnation—men are willing even to risk a revolution rather than continue in a state of unpromising monotony.

Linton, whose own plans required that the others should be full of occupation of one kind or other, was the first to give the impulse, by reminding Miss Meek that her sovereignty had, up to this time, been a dead letter.

"You have positively done nothing," said he, "since your accession. Here we are, all ready to do your bidding, only waiting for the shadow of a wish on your part. There is no obstacle anywhere; pray let us commence a series of such right royal festivities as shall cause the envy of every other sovereign in Christendom."

"I'm sure I wish for nothing better; but nobody minds me," said she, pouting.

"What shall be the opening, then?" said Linton, taking a sheet of paper, and seating himself, in all form, to write. "A masquerade?"

"By all means! A masquerade!" exclaimed a dozen voices; and at once a large circle gathered round the table where he sat.

"Does the country afford materials for one?" asked Jennings.

"Oh dear, yes!" sighed Meek; "you could gather a great many important people here by a little management."

"I'll tell Macnevin, wha commands at Limerick, to send ye every officer wha isn't under arrest," said Sir Andrew.

A speech received with great favour by various young ladies unknown to the reader.

Every one who knew anything of the three neighbouring counties was at once summoned to form part of a select committee to name those who ought to be invited. The Chief Justice was acquainted with the principal persons, from his having gone circuit; but then those he mentioned were rarely of the stamp to add lustre or brilliancy to a fancy ball; indeed, as Linton whispered, "The old Judge had either hanged or transported all the pleasant fellows."

The Infantry men from Limerick were familiar with every pretty girl of that famed capital and its environs for some miles round; and as exclusiveness was not to be the rule, a very imposing list was soon drawn up.

Then came the question of receiving so large a party, and each vied with his neighbour in generous sacrifices of accommodation; even Downie vouchsafed to say that the noise would be terrible, "but one ought to submit to anything to give pleasure to his friends."

The theatre should be the ball-room; the two drawing-rooms and the library would offer space for the company to promenade; the buffet stand in the dining-room; and supper be served in the great

conservatory, which, with its trellised vines all studded with lights disposed as stars, would have a new and beautiful effect.

Sir Andrew promised two military bands, and unmarried officers *à discrétion*.

Devoted offers of assistance poured in from every side. Foraging parties were "told off," to shoot snipe and woodcocks without ceasing; and Frobisher was to ply with a four-in-hand—of Cashel's horses—to and from Limerick every day, carrying everybody and everything that was wanting.

All the servants of the guests, as well as of the house, were to be attired in a costume which, after some discussion, was decided to be Spanish.

Unlimited facilities were to be at the disposal of all, for whatever they pleased to order. Mrs. White sat down to write to Paris for an envoy of moss-roses and camelias, with a postscript from Upton on the subject of red partridges and *foie gras*.

Jennings dictated a despatch to Mayence for two cases of Steinberger; and Howle took notes of all for a series of papers, which in four different styles were to appear in four periodicals simultaneously.

As each guest was at full liberty to invite some half-dozen friends, there was quite an excitement in comparing lists with each other, and speculations innumerable as to the dress and character they would appear in, for all were mysterious upon that head.

"But whar is Maister Cashel all this time?" said Sir Andrew; "methinks it wud na be vara polite na to hae his opiniou upon a' this, syne he must gie the siller for it."

"He's playing chess with Lady Kilgoff in the boudoir," said Jennings.

"Tell Kennyfeck," said Frobisher; "that's quite enough! Cashel calls everything where money enters, business, and hates it, in consequence."

"Oh dear! I'm precisely of his mind, then," sighed Meek, caressing his whiskers.

"Kilgoff will not remain, you'll see," said Upton. "He is not pleased with my Lady's taste for close intimacy."

"The Kennyfecks are going to-morrow or next day," said another.

"So they have been every day this last week; but if some of you gentlemen will only be gallant enough to give a good reason for remaining, they'll not stir." This was spoken by Lady Janet in her tartest of voices, and with a steady stare at Upton, who stroked his moustaches in very palpable confusion. "Yes, Sir Harvey," continued she, "I'm perfectly serious, and Mr. Linton, I perceive, agrees with me."

"As he always does, Lady Janet, when he desires to be in the right," said Linton, bowing.

"Aw—I, aw—I didn't think it was so easy in that quarter, aw!" said Jennings, in a low semi-confidential tone.

"I'll insure you for a fair premium, Jennings, if you have any fancy that way."

"Aw, I don't know—concern looks hazardous—ha, ha, ha!—don't you think so?" But as nobody joined in his laughter, he resumed, in a lower voice, "There's Upton's very spoony indeed about one of them."

"It's the aunt," said Linton; "a very fine woman, too; what the French call a '*beauté sévère;*' but classical, quite classical."

"Confounded old harridan!" muttered Upton between his teeth; "I'd not take her with Rothschild's bank at her disposal."

All this little chit-chat was a thing got up by Linton, while stationing himself in a position to watch Cashel and Lady Kilgoff, who sat, at a chess-table, in an adjoining room. It needed not Linton's eagle glance to perceive that neither was attentive to the game, but that they were engaged in deep and earnest conversation. Lady Kilgoff's back was towards him, but Roland's face he could see clearly, and watch the signs of anger and impatience it displayed.

"A little more noise and confusion here," thought Linton, "and they'll forget that they're not a hundred miles away;" and acting on this, he set about arranging the company in various groups; and while he disposed a circle of very fast-talking old ladies, to discuss rank and privileges, in one corner, he employed some others in devising a character quadrille, over which Mrs. White was to preside; and then, seating a young lady at the piano, one of those determined performers who run a steeple-chase through waltz, polka, and mazurka, for hours uninterruptedly, he saw that he had manufactured a very pretty chaos "off-hand."

While hurrying hither and thither, directing, instructing, and advising every one, he contrived also, and as it were by mere accident, to draw across the doorway of the boudoir the heavy velvet curtain that performed the function of a door. The company were far too busied in their various occupations to remark this; far less was it perceived by Lady Kilgoff or Roland. Nobody knew better than Linton how to perform the part of flywheel to that complicated engine called society; he could regulate its pace to whatever speed he pleased; and upon this occasion he pushed the velocity to the utmost; and, by dint of that miraculous magnetism by which men of warm imagination and quick fancy inspire their less susceptible neighbours, he spread the contagion of his own merry humour, and converted the drawing-room into a scene of almost riotous gaiety.

"They want no more leadership now," said he, and slipped from the room and hastened towards the library, where sat Lord Kilgoff, surrounded by folios of Grotius and Puffendorf—less, indeed, for

perusal and study, than as if inhaling the spirit of diplomatic craft from their presence.

"Nay, my Lord, this is too much," said he, entering with a smile; "some relaxation is really necessary. Pray come and dissipate a little with us in the drawing-room."

"Don't lose my place, however," said he, smiling far more graciously than his wont. "I was just considering that assertion of Grotius, wherein he lays it down that 'a river is always objectionable as a national boundary.' I dissent completely from the doctrine. A river has all the significance of a natural frontier. It is the line of demarcation drawn from the commencement of the world between different tracts, and at once suggests separation."

"Very true, my Lord; I see your observation in all its justice. A river, in the natural world, is like the distinguishing symbol of rank in the social, and should ever be a barrier against unwarrantable intrusion."

Lord Kilgoff smiled, tapped his snuff-box, and nodded, as though to say, "Continue." Linton understood the hint in this wise, and went on:

"And yet, my Lord, there is reason to fear that, with individuals as with nations, these demarcations are losing their '*prestige*.' What people call enlightenment and progress, now-a-days, is the mere negation of these principles."

"Every age has thrown some absurd theory to the surface, Sir," said Lord Kilgoff, proudly; "Southcotians, Mormons, and Radicals among the rest. But truth, Sir, has always the ascendancy in the long run. Facts cannot be sneered down; and the Pyrenees and the English Peerage are facts, Mr. Linton, and similar facts, too!"

Linton looked like one who divided himself between rebuke and conviction—submissive, but yet satisfied.

"Give me your arm, Linton; I'm still very far from strong; this place disagrees with me. I fancy the air is rheumatic, and I am impatient to get away; but the fact is, I have been lingering in the hope of receiving some tidings from the Foreign-office, which I had rather would reach me here, than at my own house."

"Precisely, my Lord; the request then has the air—I mean, it shows you have been sought after by the Minister, and solicited to take office when not thinking of the matter yourself."

"Quite so; I open the despatch, as it may be, at the breakfast-table, jocularly observing that it looks official, eh?"

"Exactly, my Lord; you even surmise that it may prove an appointment you have solicited for one of your numerous *protégés*—something in the Colonies, or the 'troop,' without purchase, in the Blues?"

Lord Kilgoff laughed—for him, heartily—at Linton's concurrence in his humour, and went on:

"And when I open it, Linton, and read the contents, eh?"

Here he paused, as if asking what effect his astute friend would ascribe to such pleasant tidings.

"I think I see your Lordship throw the heavy packet from you with a 'Pshaw!' of disappointment; while you mutter to your next neighbour, 'I have been warding off this these two or three last years, but there's no help for it; the King insists upon my taking the mission at Florence!'"

"I must say, Mr. Linton, your conjecture strikes me as strained and unnatural. The appointment to represent my august master at the court of Tuscany might be a worthy object of my ambition. I cannot agree with the view you take of it."

Linton saw that he had "charged too far," and hastened to secure his retreat.

"I spoke, my Lord, rather with reference to your regret at quitting the scenes of your natural influence at home, of withdrawing from this distracted country the high example of your presence, the wisdom of your counsels, the munificence of your charity. These are sad exports at such a time as this!"

Lord Kilgoff sighed—he sighed heavily; he knew Ireland had gone through many trials and afflictions, but the dark future which Linton pictured had never presented itself so full of gloom before. He doubtless felt that, when he left the ship, she would not long survive the breakers; and, sunk in these reveries, he walked along at Linton's side till they gained the picture-gallery, at one extremity of which lay the boudoir we have spoken of.

"Poor things, my Lord!" said Linton, shrugging his shoulders as he passed along, and casting a contemptuous glance at the apocryphal Vandycks and Murillos around, and for whose authenticity he had himself, in nearly every case, been the guarantee.

Lord Kilgoff gave a fleeting look at them, but said nothing; and Linton, to occupy time, went on:

"New men, like our friend here, should never aspire above the Flemish school. Your Cuyps, and Hobbemas, and Vanderveldes are easily understood, and their excellences are soon learned. Even Mieris and Gerard Dow are open to such connoisseurship; but, to feel the calm nobility of a Velasquez, the sublime dignity of a Vandyck, or the glorious intellectuality of a Titian portrait, a man must be a born gentleman, in its most exalted signification. What a perfect taste your collection at Kilgoff displays! All Spanish or Venetian, if I mistake not."

"Are we not like to disturb a *tête-à-tête*, Linton?" said Lord

Kilgoff, nudging his friend's arm, and laughing slyly, as he pointed through the large frame of plate-glass that formed a door to the boudoir.

"By Jove!" said Linton, in a low whisper, "and so we were! You are always thoughtful, my Lord!"

"You know the adage, Linton, 'An old poacher makes the best gamekeeper!' Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ah, my Lord! I have heard as much of you. But who can they be?"

"We shall soon see, for it is always better in these cases to incur the rudeness of interruption than the meanness of *espionnage*;" and so saying, Lord Kilgoff opened the door and entered. Although in so doing the noise he made might easily have attracted notice, the chess-players, either deep in their preoccupation, or habituated to the uproar of the drawing-room, paid no attention, so that it was only as he exclaimed "Lady Kilgoff!" that both started, and beheld him, as, pale with passion, he stood supporting himself on the back of a chair.

"Pray don't stir, Sir; be seated, I beg," said he, addressing Cashel, in a voice that shook with anger; "my interruption of your game was pure accident."

"No apologies, my Lord; we are both but indifferent players," said Cashel, smiling, but yet very far from at ease.

"Your seclusion at least bespeaks the interest you feel in the game. Mr. Linton and I can vouch——" (Here his Lordship turned to call his witness, but he had left the court, or, more properly speaking, had never entered it.)

"Linton here?" said Lady Kilgoff, in a voice which, though scarce a whisper, was actually thrilling in the intensity of its meaning.

"I hope, Sir, when you have lived somewhat more in the world, you will learn that the first duty of a host is not to compromise a guest."

"I am most willing to be taught by your Lordship's better knowledge; but if I am to benefit by the lesson in the present case, it must be more clearly expressed," said Cashel, calmly.

"As for you, Madam," said Lord Kilgoff, I cannot compliment you on the progress you have made in acquiring the habits and instincts of 'your order.'"

"My Lord!" exclaimed she; and then, with a countenance wherein rebuke and entreaty were blended, she stopped.

"I am aware, Sir, what *éclat* young gentlemen now-a-days derive from the supposed preference of individuals of exalted rank; and I would hope that your vanity may be most in fault, here."

"My Lord, one word—only one," said Cashel, eagerly; "I am sadly afflicted with the infirmity of hot temper, which never gives way more surely, nor more suddenly, than when accused wrongfully. Such is

your Lordship doing at present. I would entreat you not to say what a very little calm reflection will call upon you to retract."

"This concerns *me*, Sir, most of all," said Lady Kilgoff, rising and drawing herself proudly up. "These unworthy suspicions had never occurred to you, had they not been prompted; but you might have believed that when I sacrificed all I have done, for that rank of which so incessantly you remind me, that I would not rashly hazard the position for which I paid so dearly.—Let us leave this now, my Lord; Mr. Cashel can scarcely desire a presence that has so ungratefully rewarded his hospitality, and I, at least, shall be spared the mortification of meeting one who has been a witness to such an outrage."

"This is not to end here, Sir," said Lord Kilgoff, in a whisper to Cashel, who, more intent upon the words Lady Kilgoff had just uttered, carelessly answered,

"As you will."

"Good-by, Mr. Cashel," said she, holding out her hand; "I wish I was leaving a better *souvenir* behind me than the memory of this last scene."

"I will never remember it, Madam," said Cashel; "but I would beg that you may not let an incident so trivial, so perfectly devoid of everything like importance, hasten your going. Nothing save malevolence and calumny could suggest any other impression, and I would beseech you not to favour, by such a step as a hasty departure, the malace that scandal-lovers may circulate."

"This is matter for *my* consideration, Sir," said Lord Kilgoff, haughtily; while, drawing Lady Kilgoff's arm within his own, he made a vigorous attempt to move away with dignity.

CHAPTER XIX.

Is he not too old for such gambols?—Sir Raymond.

Cashel was in no mood to join his company after such a scene, and hastening up-stairs, he entered his dressing-room. What was his surprise to see that Linton was seated in an easy-chair before the fire, enjoying a cigar and a new novel, with all the cool negligence of his unruffled nature.

"At last!" cried he, as Cashel entered. "I have been waiting here most impatiently to know how you got through it."

"Through what!—how—what do you mean?"

"That affair with Kilgoff. I slipped away when I saw that he *would* enter the boudoir, after having coughed and sneezed like a

grampus, in the hope of attracting your attention; but you were so confoundedly engrossed by my Lady's agreeability—so excessively tender——"

"Linton, I must stop you at once. I may barter some of my own self-respect for quietness' sake, and let you talk this way of *me*, but you shall not do so of another."

"Hang it, man, she is an older friend than yourself. I have known her these seven years—as little more than a child."

"Your friendship would seem a costly blessing, if you understand its duties always in this fashion."

"I hope it will admit of a little frankness, at all events," said he, affecting a laugh. "It will be too bad if you both fall out with me for watching over your interests."

"I don't understand you."

"I will be plain enough. I have seen for many a day back what has been going on. I perceived the very commencement of the mischief, when probably neither she nor you dreamed of it; and, resigning all the esteem that years had cemented between us, I spoke to her. Ay, Roland, I told her what would happen. I said, that qualities like yours could not be brought every day into contrast with those of poor Kilgoff without most unhappy comparisons. I explained to her, that if she did form an attachment to you, it could not be one of those passing flirtations that an easy code of fashion admits and sanctions; that you were a fellow whose generous nature could never descend to such heartless levity, and that there was no sacrifice of position and prospect you would hesitate to make for a woman that loved you; and I asked her flatly, would she bring such ruin upon you? The greater fool myself; I ought to have known better. She not only refused to listen to me, but actually resented my attempted kindness by actual injury. I don't want to speak for myself here, so I'll hasten on. It was all but a cut between us, for months before we met here. You may remember, in Dublin, we rarely even spoke to each other; we, who once had been like brother and sister!

"Well, before she was a week here, I saw that the danger I had dreaded so long, was hourly becoming more imminent. *You*, very possibly, had not a serious thought upon the matter, but *she* had actually fallen in love! I suppose you must have played hero, at that shipwreck, in some very chivalrous fashion; however it was, my Lady had lost her heart, precisely at the same time that his Lordship had lost his head—leaving you, I conjecture, in a very awkward dilemma. Seeing there was no time to lose, and resolving to sacrifice myself to save her, I made one more effort. I'll not weary you with a narrative of my eloquence, nor repeat any of the ten-thousand-and-one reasons I gave, for her shunning your society, and, if need were, leaving your house. The whole ended as I ought to have foreseen it would—in an

open breach between us; she, candidly avowing that she would be my deadly enemy through life, and even procure a personal rupture between you and me, if pushed to it, by my 'impertinent importunity,' so she called it. I own to you I was completely dumfounded by this. I knew that she had courage for anything, and that, if she did care for a man, there would be a recklessness in the course she would follow that would defy guidance or direction, and so I abstained from any further interference; and, as you may have remarked yourself, I actually estranged myself from you."

"I did remark that," said Cashel, gravely.

"Well, to-night, when by mere accident Kilgoff and I had sauntered into the gallery and came upon you in the boudoir, I own frankly I was not sorry for it; unpleasant as such scenes are, they are better—a hundred thousand times better—than the sad consequences they anticipate; and even should anything take place personally, I'd rather see you stand Kilgoff's fire at 'twelve paces,' than be exposed to the flash of my Lady's eye at 'one.' "

"Your friendly zeal," said Cashel, with a very peculiar emphasis on the words, "would seem to have got the upper hand of your habitually sharp perception; there was nothing to fear in any part of my intimacy with Lady Kilgoff. I have been but too short a time conversant with fashionable life to forget more vulgar habits, and, among them, that which forbids a man to pay his addresses to the wife of another. I need not vindicate her Ladyship; that she has taken a warm, I shame not to say an affectionate, interest in my fortunes, may have been imprudent. I know not what your code admits of or rejects, but, her kindness demands all my gratitude, and, if need be, the defence that a man of honour should always be ready to offer for the cause of truth."

"Don't you perceive, Cashel, that all you are saying only proves what I have been asserting—that, while you are actually ignorant of your danger, the peril is but the greater? I repeat it to you, however intact *your* heart may be, *hers* is in your keeping. I know this; nay, I say it advisedly—don't shake your head and look so confident—I repeat it, I know this to be the case."

"You *know* it?" said Cashel, as though Linton's words had startled his convictions.

"I *know* it, and I'll prove it, but upon one condition, your word of honour as to secrecy." Cashel nodded, and Linton went on. "Some short time back, some one, under the shelter of the anonymous, wrote her a letter, stating that they had long watched her intimacy with you, grieving over it, and regretting that she should have yielded any portion of her affection to one, whose whole life had been a series of deceptions; that your perjuries in Love's Court were undeniable, and

that you were actually married, legally and regularly married, to a young Spanish girl."

"Was this told her?" said Cashel, gasping for breath.

"Yes," the very name was given—Maritaña, if I mistake not.—Is there such a name?"

Cashel bent his head slightly in assent.

"How you had deserted this poor girl after having won her affections——"

"This is false, Sir; every word of it false!" said Cashel, purple with passion; "nor will I permit any man to drag her name before this world of slanderers in connexion with such a tale. Great Heaven! what hypocrisy it is to have a horror for the assassin and the cut-throat, and yet give shelter, in your society, to those who stab character and poison reputation! I tell you, Sir, that among those buccaneers you have so often sneered at, you'd not meet one base enough for this."

"I think you are too severe upon this kind of transgression, Cashel," said Linton, calmly. "It is as often prompted by mere idleness as malice. The great mass of people in this life have nothing to do, and they go wrong, just for occupation. There may have been—there generally is—a little grain of truth amid all the chaff of fiction; there may, therefore, be a young lady whose name was——"

"I forbid you to speak it. I knew her, and girl as she was, she was not one to suffer insult in her presence, nor shall it be offered to her in her absence."

"My dear fellow, your generous warmth should not be unjust, or else you will find few friends willing to incur your anger in the hope of doing you service. I never believed a word of this story. Marriage — adventure — even the young lady's identity, I deemed all fictions together."

Cashel muttered something he meant to be apologetic for his rudeness, and Linton was not slow in accepting even so unwilling a reparation.

"Of course I think no more of it," cried he, with affected cordiality. "I was going to tell you how Lady Kilgoff received the tidings—exactly the very opposite to what her kind correspondent had intended. It actually seemed to encourage her in her passion, as though there was a similarity in your cases. Besides, she felt, perhaps, that she was not damaging your future career, as it might be asserted she had done, were you unmarried. These are mere guesses on my part. I own to you, I have little skill in reading the Machiavellism of a female heart: the only key to its mystery I know of is, 'always suspect what is least likely.'"

"And I am to sit down patiently under all this calumny!" said Cashel, as he walked the room with hasty steps. "I am perhaps to

receive at my table those whose amusement it is so to sport with my character and my fame!"

"It is a very naughty world, no doubt of it," said Linton, lighting a fresh cigar; "and the worst of it is, it tempts one always to be as roguish as one's neighbours, for self-preservation."

"You say I am not at liberty to speak of this letter to Lady Kilgoff?"

"Of course not; I am myself a defaulter in having told the matter to you."

Cashel paced the room hurriedly; and what a whirlwind of opposing thoughts rushed through his brain! for while at times all Lady Kilgoff's warnings about Linton, all his own suspicions of his duplicity and deceit, were uppermost, there was still enough in Linton's narrative, were it true, to account for Lady Kilgoff's hatred of him. The counsels *he* had given, and *she* rejected, were enough to furnish a feud for ever between them. At which side lay the truth? And then, this letter about Maritaña—who was the writer? Could it be Linton himself? and if so, would he have ventured to allude to it?

These thoughts harassed and distressed him at every instant, and in his present feeling towards Linton he could not ask his aid to solve the mystery.

Now, he was half disposed to charge him with the whole slander; his passion prompted him to seek an object for his vengeance, and the very cool air of indifference Linton assumed was provocative of anger. The next moment, he felt ashamed of such intemperate warmth, and almost persuaded himself to tell him of his proposal for Mary Leicester, and thus prove the injustice of the suspicion about Lady Kilgoff.

"There's a tap at the door, I think," said Linton. "I suppose, if it's Frobisher, or any of them, you'd rather not be bored?" And, as if divining the answer, he arose and opened it.

"Lord Kilgoff's compliments, and requests Mr. Linton will come over to his room," said his Lordship's valet.

"Very well," said Linton, and closed the door. "What can the old Peer want at this time of night? Am I to bring a message to you, Cashel?"

Cashel gave an insolent laugh.

"Or shall I tell him the story of Davoust at Hamburg, when the Syndicate accused him of peculating, and mentioned some millions that he had abstracted from the treasury. 'All untrue, gentlemen,' said he; 'I never heard of the money before, but since you have been polite enough to mention the fact, I'll not show myself so ungrateful as to forget it.' Do you think Kilgoff would see the *à propos?*"

With this speech, uttered in that half-jocular mood habitual to

him, Linton left the room, while Cashel continued to ponder over the late scene, and its probable consequences; not the least serious of which was, that Linton was possessor of his secrets. Now, thinking upon what he had just heard of Lady Kilgoff—now, picturing to himself how Mary Leicester would regard his pledge to Maritaña, he walked impatiently up and down, when the door opened, and Linton appeared.

"Just as I surmised!" said he, throwing himself into a chair, and laughing heartily. "My Lord will be satisfied with nothing but a duel *à mort*."

"I see no cause for mirth in such a contingency," said Cashel, gravely; "the very rumour of it would ruin Lady Kilgoff."

"That of course is a grave consideration," said Linton, affecting seriousness; "but it is still more his than yours."

"*He* is a dotard!" said Cashel, passionately, "and not to be thought of. *She* is young, beautiful, and unprotected. Her fortune is a hard one already, nor is there any need to make it still more cruel."

"I half doubt she would think it so!" said Linton, with an air of levity, as he stooped to select a cigar.

"How do you mean, Sir?" cried Cashel, angrily.

"Why, simply, that when you shoot my Lord, you'll scarcely desert my Lady," said he, with the same easy manner.

"You surely told him that his suspicions were unfounded and unjust; that my intimacy, however prompted by the greatest admiration, had never transgressed the line of respect?"

"Of course, my dear fellow, I said a thousand things of you that I didn't believe,—and worse still, neither did he; but the upshot of all is, that he fancies it is a question between the Peerage and the great untitled class; he has got it into his wise brain that the Barons of Runnymede will rise from their monumental marble in horror and shame at such an invasion of 'the order;' and that there will be no longer security beneath the coronet when such a domestic Jack Cade as yourself goes at large."

"I tell you again, Linton—and let it be for the last time—your pleasantry is most ill-timed. I cannot, I will not, gratify this old man's humour, nor make myself ridiculous to pamper his absurd vanity. Besides, to throw a slander upon his wife, he must seek another instrument."

By accident, mere accident, Cashel threw a more than usual significance into these last few words; and Linton, whose command over his features rarely failed, taken suddenly by what seemed a charge, grew deep red.

Cashel started as he saw the effect of his speech; he was like one who sees his chance shot has exploded a magazine.

"What!" cried he, "have you a grudge in that quarter, and is it thus you would pay it?"

"I hope you mean this in jest, Cashel?" said Linton, with a voice of forced calm.

"Faith, I never was less in a mood for joking; my words have only such meaning as your heart accuses you of."

"Come, come, then there is no harm done. But pray, be advised, and never say as much to any one who has less regard for you. And now, once more, what shall we do with Kilgoff? He has charged me to carry you a message, and I only undertook the mission in the hope of some accommodation—something that should keep the whole affair strictly amongst ourselves."

"Then you wish for my answer?"

"Of course."

"It is soon said. I'll not meet him."

"Not meet him? But, just consider——"

"I *have* considered, and I tell you once more, I'll not meet him. He cannot lay with truth any injury at my door; and I will not, to indulge his petulant vanity, be led to injure one whose fair fame is of more moment than our absurd differences."

"I own to you, Cashel, this does not strike me as a wise course. By going out and receiving his fire, you have an opportunity of declaring on the ground your perfect innocence of the charge; at least, such, I fancy, would be what I should do, in a like event. I would say, 'My Lord, it is your pleasure, under a very grave and great misconception, to desire to take my life. I have stood here for you, once, and will do so, again, as many times as you please, till either your vengeance be satisfied or your error recognised; simply repeating, as I now do, that I am innocent.' In this way you will show that personal risk is nothing with you in comparison with the assertion of a fact that regards another far more nearly than yourself. I will not dispute with you which line is the better one; but, so much will I say, This is what 'the World' would look for."

The word was a spell! Cashel felt himself in a difficulty perfectly novel. He was, as it were, arraigned to appear before a court of whose proceedings he knew little or nothing. How "the World" would regard the affair, was the whole question—what "the World" would say of Lady Kilgoff—how receive her exculpation. Now Linton assuredly knew this same "World" well; he knew it in its rare moods of good-humour, when it is pleased to speak its flatteries to some popular idol of the hour; and he knew it, in its more congenial temper, when it utters its fatal judgments on unproved delinquency and imputed wrong. None knew better than himself the course by which the "Holy Office" of slander disseminates its decrees, and he had often impressed Roland with a suitable awe of its

mysterious doings. The word was, then, talismanic; for, however at the bar of Conscience he might stand acquitted, Cashel knew that it was to another and very different jurisdiction the appeal should be made. Linton saw what was passing in his mind, for he had often watched him in similar conflicts, and he hastened to press his advantage.

"Understand me well, Cashel; I do not pretend to say that this is the common-sense solution of such a difficulty; nor is it the mode which a man with frankness of character and honourable intentions would perhaps have selected; but it is the way in which the world will expect to see it treated, and any deviation from which would be regarded as a solecism in our established code of conduct."

"In what position will it place *her?* That's the only question worth considering."

"Perfect exculpation. You, as I said before, receive Kilgoff's fire, and protest your entire innocence: my Lord accepts your assurance, and goes home to breakfast—*voilà tout!*"

"What an absurd situation! I declare to you, I shrink from the ridicule that must attach to such a rencontre, meeting a man of his age and infirmity!"

"They make pistols admirably now-a-days," said Linton, dryly; "even the least athletic can pull a hair-trigger."

Cashel made no answer to this speech, but stood still, uncertain how to act.

"Come, come," said Linton, "you are giving the whole thing an importance it does not merit; just let the old Peer have the pleasure of his bit of heroism, and it will all end as I have mentioned. They'll leave this to-morrow early, reach Killaloe to breakfast, whence Kilgoff will start for the place of meeting, and, by ten o'clock, you'll be there also. The only matter to arrange is, whom you'll get. Were it a real affair, I'd say Upton, or Frobisher; but, here, it is a question of secrecy, not skill. I'd advise, if possible, your having MacFarline."

"Sir Andrew?" said Cashel, half laughing.

"Yes; his age and standing are precisely what we want here. He'll not refuse you; and if he should, it's only telling Lady Janet that we want to shoot Kilgoff, and she'll order him out at once."

"I protest it looks more absurd than ever!" said Roland, impatiently.

"That is merely your own prejudice," said Linton. "You cannot regard single combat but as a life-struggle between two men, equal not merely in arms, but alike in bodily energy, prowess, skill and courage. We look on the matter here as a mere lottery, wherein the less expert as often draws the prize——But there, as I vow, that was

two o'clock! It struck, and I promised to see Kilgoff again to-night. By the way, he'll want horses. Where can he get them?"

"Let him take mine; there are plenty of them, and he'll never know anything of it."

"Very true. What an obliging adversary, that actually 'posts' his enemy to the ground!"

"How am I to see MacFarline to-night?"

"You'll have to call him out of bed. Let Flint say there's an orderly from Limerick with despatches; that Biddy Molowney won't pay her poor-rate, or Paddy Flanagan has rescued his pig, and the magistrates are calling for the Fifty-something and two squadrons of horse, to protect the police. You'll soon have him up; and, once up, his Scotch blood will make him as discreet as an archdeacon. So, good night; add a codicil to your will in favour of my Lady, and to bed."

With this Linton took his candle and retired.

Cashel, once more alone, began to ponder over the difficulty of his position. The more he reasoned on the matter, the stronger appeared his fears that Lady Kilgoff's name would be compromised by a foolish and unmeaning quarrel; while, for himself, he saw nothing but ridicule and shame from his compliance. That omnipotent arbiter, "the World," might indeed be satisfied, but Roland suspected that few of its better-judging members would hesitate to condemn a course as unfeeling as it was unwise.

A quick, sharp knocking at the door of his room aroused him from his musings. It was Lady Kilgoff's maid, breathless and agitated. She came to say that Lord Kilgoff, after a scene of passionate excitement with her Ladyship, had been seized with paralysis, and that he was now lying powerless and unconscious on his bed.

"Come, Sir, for mercy's sake; come quickly. My Lady is distracted, nor can any of us think of what to do."

Cashel scratched a few lines in pencil to Tiernay, requesting his immediate presence, and, ringing for his servant, at once despatched a message to the village. This done, he followed the maid to Lord Kilgoff's chamber.

CHAPTER XX.

The waters darken, and the rustling sound
Tells of the coming "squall."

THE PILOT.

LORD KILGOFF was stretched upon a bed, breathing heavily; one arm lay straight beside him, and the other crossed upon his breast. His features were deadly pale, save in the centre of each cheek, where

a deep-red spot seemed to burn. A slight, very slight distortion marked his features, and a faint tremor seemed to quiver on his lip. Beside the bed, with an expression of some conscious terror in her face, sat Lady Kilgoff; her white dressing-gown, over which her hair fell in long abundant masses, added pallor to her looks. Her eyes met Cashel's as he entered, and then reverted to the bed where the sick man lay, but with an expression less of sorrow than of bewilderment and confusion.

She looked, indeed, like one whose faculties had been stunned by some sudden shock, and had, as yet, made no effort to recal them to their wonted exercise. At the foot of the bed stood the maid, whose half-uttered sobs were the only sounds to break the stillness.

Cashel drew near, and placed his fingers on the sick man's pulse. Often had he, in his former adventurous career, felt the ebbing current of a life's blood, and measured its power by its resistance. The full but labouring swell of the heart might well deceive him, then, into the impression that no grave consequences were near. He knew not that in such affections the pulse can be round, and strong, and impulsive; and it was with an earnest conviction of truth, he whispered to her,

"There is no danger."

She looked up, but it was easy to see that although the words had sounded like comfort, they had not pierced the dense veil that clouded her mind.

Cashel repeated the phrase, and said,

"Tiernay will soon be here, but have no fears; my own slight skill can tell you there is nothing of peril. Had you not better retire from this—even to the window?"

A faint "No" was all she uttered.

"He was in perfect health this afternoon?" said Cashel to the maid.

"My Lord was better than usual, Sir; he took out his collar and his star to look at them, and he spoke very pleasantly of going abroad in the spring. He was reading in the library when Mr. Linton went to him."

"Linton!" muttered Lady Kilgoff, with a shudder.

"I think I hear voices in the corridor," said Cashel. "If it be the Doctor, say I wish to speak with him before he sees my Lord."

The maid left the room to perform the commission, and scarcely had the door closed, than Lady Kilgoff started up, and seizing an object which lay on the bed, exclaimed, "How came it in your keeping?"

"What?" cried Cashel, in amazement.

"This bracelet," said she, holding out towards him the massive bracelet which Linton had contrived to detach from her arm at their meeting in the "Park."

"I never saw it before—never in my life."

She sank slowly back upon the chair without speaking, while a faint tremor shook her frame.

"The Doctor is without, Sir," said the maid at this moment, and Cashel hastened out. He spoke a few hurried words to Tiernay, and then walked towards his own room. That some deep and artful treachery had drawn its web around and about him, involving not himself alone but another too, he now clearly felt. He saw danger, as the sailor sees it in the lowering sky and fleeting scud, but as yet he knew not from what quarter the "squall" was coming. His suspicions all pointed to Linton; but why attribute such a game to him? and if such were his purpose, to what end could he practise this treachery?"

"Would it not be better," thought he, "to see him at once; tell him my suspicions openly; say that I no longer trust him as my friend, but feel towards him the misgivings of a secret enemy? If there is manliness about him, he will avow his enmity, or resent my distrust; either or both would be a relief to what I now suffer. Ah! here he comes," said he; but he was deceived; it was Tiernay entered.

"What say you, Doctor? Is the case a grave one?"

"Worse; it is nearly hopeless!"

"What! do you fear for his life?"

"Life or intellect, one or the other, must pay the penalty. This is the second shock. The shipwreck gave the first, and rent the poor edifice almost in twain; this will, in all likelihood, lay it in ashes."

"This is very dreadful!" said Cashel, upon whom the attendant events and the consequences were weighing heavily.

"He has told me all!" said Tiernay, almost sternly. "*His* jealousy and *her* levity—the rampant pride of station—the reckless freedom of a broken heart—such are the ingredients that have made up a sad story, which may soon become a tragedy."

"But there was no reason for it; his jealousy was absurd—unfounded."

"As you will. You may go further, and say he could not lose what he never owned. I saw the peril—I even warned you of it."

"I can only comprehend you by half," said Cashel, impatiently. "You imply blame to me where I can feel none."

"I blame you as I will ever do those, who, not fearing danger for themselves, are as indifferent about their neighbours. It is not of this silly old man I am thinking here—it is of her, who, without a protector, should have found one in every man of generous and honourable feeling; not as you, perhaps, understand protection—not by the challenge hurled in the face of all who would dare to asperse her fair fame, but by that studied respect, that hallowed deference, that should

avert detraction. Neither you nor any other could be the champion of her honour; but you might have been its defender by a better and a nobler heroism. It is too late to think of this now; let us not lose time in vain regrets. We must take measures that ungenerous reports should not be circulated."

The door suddenly opened at the instant, and Linton, in his dressing-gown, entered; but, seeing Tiernay, made a motion to retire.

"Come in," said Cashel; and there was something almost peremptory in the words.

"I feared I might prove an intruder, seeing the Doctor here. Is it true what my servant says, that Kilgoff is dangerously ill?"

Cashel nodded.

"Poor fellow! he has no command over himself in those paroxysms of passion, which his folly and vanity are so constantly stirring up. But is the case serious?"

"He will scarcely recover, Sir," said Tiernay; "and it was because my functions as a physician can be of so little benefit, that I ventured to offer my services as a friend in the case, and give some counsel as to what should be done."

"Most considerate, indeed," said Linton, but in an accent at once impossible to say whether ironical or the reverse.

"I said, Sir," resumed Tiernay, "that it would be becoming that no false representation should obtain currency as to the origin of the illness, nor that a momentary excitement of a feeble intellect should be assumed as the settled conviction of a sound mind. My Lord Kilgoff has had something like altercation with his wife, and being a weak and failing man, with breaking faculties, he has been seized with a paralytic attack."

"Very thoughtful, all this," said Linton, gravely; "pray command me in any part of your plan where I may be serviceable."

"The plan is this," said Cashel: "here is a case where a terrible calamity has befallen, and which can be made worse only by calumny. To make the slanderer pay the heaviest penalty of his infamy——"

"Nay, nay—this is not our plan," said Tiernay, gently; "Lord Kilgoff's attack must be spoken of without connexion with any circumstances which preceded it this evening. Nothing was more likely to occur than such a seizure: his age—his late illness—his peculiar habit, all predisposed to it."

"Just so," interposed Cashel, hastily; "and as none save you, Linton, and myself, know anything of the matter, it need never gain wider publicity."

"Of course nothing can be easier than this. The Lady 'Janets' need never hear a word more than you choose to tell them," said Linton.

"In a few days he will bear removal. Change will be necessary for him; and, in fact, our caution is, doubtless, greater than the necessity warrants," added Tiernay.

"You will, of course, leave everything to take its course in the house?" said Linton. "To interfere with all the plans of pleasure would be to give rise to malicious rumours."

"I scarcely know how to act," said Cashel. "It looks unfeeling and unkind that we should give ourselves up to gaiety at such a moment."

"Mr. Linton's counsel may be wise, notwithstanding," said Tiernay. "His Lordship may continue a long time in his present state."

"Exactly what I mean," said Linton. "He will probably linger on, unchanged; so that if events follow their habitual train, there will be little time or temptation to spread scandal about him; and then, what, at first blush, seems to lack kindness, is, in reality, the very truest and most considerate service we can render."

"Then you will look to this part of the matter, Linton?" said Cashel, on whom his apparent frankness had resumed its former ascendancy.

"Leave it all to me," said he; "and so good night." And, with that, he departed, leaving Cashel and Tiernay together.

They were silent for some minutes, as Linton's retiring steps were heard going towards his own room. Soon after the loud bang of a door resounded through the house, and all was still. Little knew they, that scarcely had he gained his room than he left it noiselessly, and, slipping down the great stairs, crossed the hall, and, entering the theatre, proceeded by the secret passage which led to Cashel's dressing-room, and through the thin panel that covered which, he could easily overhear whatever was spoken within.

"At least you will allow that he has been candid with us here?" said Cashel, in a tone of remonstrance.

"I cannot afford to give a man my confidence, because I am unable to sound his intentions," said Tiernay. "I disliked this Linton from the first, and I never yet saw any distinct reason to alter the sentiment. That he has puzzled me—ay, completely puzzled me and all my calculations, within the last few days, is quite true. He has done that which, in a man like himself, disconcerts one altogether, because it is so difficult to trace his probable motive. What would you say, were I to tell you that this deep man of the world, this artful and subtle gambler in the game of life, has actually proposed for a girl who is utterly without fortune or family influence? That she is endowed with noble attributes—that she is one a prince might have chosen to share his fortunes, I deem as nothing to the purpose, for I cannot conceive such qualities as hers could weigh with him: but so it is, he has actually made an offer of his hand."

"Dare your confidence go further?" said Cashel, eagerly, "and tell me—to whom?"

"Yes. I have been guilty of one breach of faith in telling you so much, and I'll hazard all, and let you hear the remainder. It was Mary Leicester."

"Mary Leicester!" echoed Cashel, but in a voice barely audible.

"Mary Leicester," continued Tiernay, "may count it among her triumphs to have attracted one whom all the world regards as an adventurer; a man living by the exercise of his clever wits, profiting by the weaknesses and follies of his acquaintances, and deriving his subsistence from the vices he knows how to pamper."

"And what answer has he received?" asked Cashel, timidly.

"None, as yet. Poor Corrigan, overwhelmed by misfortune, threatened by one whose menace, if enforced, would be his death-stroke, has begged for a day or two to consider; but the reply is certain."

"And will be——" Cashel could not command his emotion as he spoke.

"Refusal."

"You are certain of this, Tiernay? You are positive of what you say?"

"I know it. My old friend, were he even inclined to this alliance, could never coerce her; and Mary Leicester has long since learned to distinguish between the agreeable qualities of a clever man and the artful devices of a treacherous one. She knows him; she reads him thoroughly, and as thoroughly she despises him! I will not say that her impressions have been unaided; she received more than one letter from a kind friend—Lady Kilgoff; and these were her first warnings. Poor Corrigan knows nothing of this; and Mary, seeing how Linton's society was pleasurable to the old man, actually shrank from the task of undeceiving him. 'He has so few pleasures,' said she to me one evening; 'why deny him this one?'—'It is a poison which cannot injure in small doses, Doctor,' added she, another time; and so, half jestingly, she reasoned, submitting to an intimacy that was odious to her, because it added a gleam of comfort to the chill twilight of his declining life."

"And you are sure of this—you are certain she will refuse him?" cried Cashel, eagerly.

"I am her confidant," said Tiernay, "and you see how worthily I repay the trust! Nay, nay! I would not tell these things to any other living; but I feel that I owe them to you. I have seen more misery in life from concealment, from the delicacy that shuns a frank avowal, than from all the falsehood that ever blackened a bad heart. Mary has told me all her secrets; ay—don't blush so deeply—and some of yours also."

Cashel did indeed grow red at this speech, and, in his effort to conceal his shame, assumed an air of dissatisfaction.

"Not so, my dear young friend," said Tiernay; "I did not mean to say one word which could offend you. Mary has indeed trusted me with the secret nearest to her heart. She has told me of the proudest moment of her life."

"When she rejected me?" said Cashel, bitterly.

"So was it—when she rejected you," re-echoed Tiernay. "When poor, she refused wealth; when friendless in all that friendship can profit, she declined protection; when almost homeless, she refused a home; when sought by one whom alone of all the world she preferred, she said him nay! It was at that moment of self-sacrifice, when she abandoned every thought of present happiness and of future hope, and devoted herself to one humble but holy duty, she felt the ecstasy of a martyr's triumph. You may think that these are exaggerations, and that I reckon at too exalted a standard such evidences of affection, but I do not think so. I believe that there is more courage in the patient submission to an obscure and unnoticed fortune, beset with daily trials and privations, than in braving the stake or the scaffold, with human sympathies to exalt the sacrifice."

"But I offered to share this duty with her; to be a son to him whom she regarded as a father."

"How little you know of the cares—the thoughtful, watchful, anxious cares—you were willing to share! You could give wealth and splendour, it is true; you could confer all the blandishments of fortune, all the luxuries that rich men command; but, one hour of gentle solicitude in sickness—one kind look, that recalled years of tenderness—one accustomed service, the tribute of affection—were worth all that gold could purchase, told ten times over. And these are not to be acquired; they are the instincts that, born in childhood, grow strong with years, till at length they form that atmosphere of love in which parents live among their children. No! Mary felt that it were a treason to rob her poor old grandfather of even a thought that should be his."

"But, I repeat it," cried Cashel, passionately, "I would participate in every care; I would share her duties, as she should share my fortunes."

"And what guarantee did you give for your fitness to such a task?" said Tiernay. "Was it by your life of pleasure, a career of wild and wasteful extravagance—was it by the unbridled freedom with which you followed every impulse of your will—was it by the example your friendships exhibited—was it by an indiscriminating generosity, that only throws a shade over better-regulated munificence, you would show that you were suited to a life of unobtrusive, humble duties?"

"You wrong me," said Cashel. "I would have lived in that cottage

yonder, without a thought or a wish for the costly pleasures you think have such attractions for me."

"You had already sold it to your friend."

"Sold it!—never!—to whom?"

"I thought Linton had purchased it."

"Never!"

"Well, you gave it as a gift?"

"I did intend to do so; but seeing the value Corrigan puts upon it, I will give Linton double—thrice the value, rather than part with it."

"What if he refuse?"

"He will not. Linton's fancies never run counter to solid advantages. A thousand pounds, with him, is always twice five hundred, come with what condition it may."

"But Linton may, for his own reasons, think differently here; his proposal to marry seems as though it were part of some settled plan; and if you have already given him a legal claim here, my opinion is, that he will uphold it."

"That I have never done; but my word is pledged, and to it he may hold me, if he will. Meanwhile, I have seen Kennyfeck this morning. The man Hoare has offered us a large sum on mortgage, and I have promised to meet them both the day after to-morrow. If I read Tom aright, 10,000*l.* will free me from every claim he has upon me."

"A heavy sum, but not ill spent if it liberate you from his friendship," cried Tiernay, eagerly.

"And so it shall."

"You promise me this—you give me your word upon it?"

"I do."

"Then there are good days in store for you. That man's intimacy has been your bane; even when you thought least of it, his influence swayed your actions and perverted your motives. Under the shadow of his evil counsels your judgment grew warped and corrupted; you saw all things in a false and distorted light; and your most fatal error of all was, that you deemed yourself a 'gentleman.'"

"I have done with him for ever," said Cashel, with slow, deliberate utterance.

"Again I say, good days are in store for you," said Tiernay.

"I cannot live a life of daily, hourly distrust," said Cashel; "nor will I try it. I will see him to-morrow; I will tell him frankly that I am weary of his fashionable protectorate; that as a scholar in modish tastes I should never do him credit, and that we must part. Our alliance was ever a factitious one; it will not be hard to sever it."

"You mistake much," said Tiernay; "the partnership will not be so easily relinquished by him who reaps all the profit."

"You read me only as a dupe," said Cashel, fiercely.

Tiernay made no reply, but waving his hand in adieu, left the room.

CHAPTER XXI.

Hell's eloquence—"TEMPTATION!"
HAROLD.

TOM KEANE, the Gatekeeper, sat moodily at his door on the morning after the events recorded in our last chapter. His reflections seemed of the gloomiest, and absorbed him so completely, that he never noticed the mounted groom, who, despatched to seek the Doctor for Lord Kilgoff, twice summoned him in vain to open the gate.

"Holloa!" cried the smartly-equipped servant, "stupid! will you open that gate, I say?"

"It's not locked," said Tom, looking up, but without the slightest indication of obeying the request.

"Don't you see the mare won't stand?" cried he, with an oath.

Tom smoked away without replying.

"Sulky brute, you are!" cried the groom; "I'm glad we're to see the last of you soon."

With this he managed to open the gate and pass on his way.

"So, it's for turnin' me out, yez are," said Tom to himself; "turnin' me out on the road—to starve, or maybe—to rob"—(these words were uttered between the puffs of his tobacco-smoke)—"after forty years in the same place."

The shrill barking of a cur-dog, an animal that in spitefulness as in mangy condition seemed no bad type of its master, now aroused him, and Tom muttered, "Bite him, Blaze! hould him fast, yer soule!"

"Call off your dog, Keane—call him off!" cried out a voice, whose tones at once bespoke a person of condition; and at the same instant Linton appeared. "You'd better fasten him up, for I feel much tempted to ballast his heart with a bullet."

And he showed a pistol which he held at full cock in his fingers.

"Faix, ye may shoot him for all I care," said Tom; "he's losing his teeth, and won't be worth a 'trawneen' 'fore long. Go in there—into the house," cried he, sulkily; and the animal shrank away craven and cowed.

"You ought to keep him tied up," said Linton; "every one complains of him."

"So I hear," said Tom, with a low, sardonic laugh; "he used only to bite the beggars, but he's begun now to be wicked with the gentlemen. I suppose he finds they taste mighty near alike."

"Just so," said Linton, laughing; "if the cur could speak, he'd tell us a labourer was as tender as 'my Lord.' I've come over to see

you," added he, after a moment's pause, "and to say that I'm sorry to have failed in my undertaking regarding you; they are determined to turn you out."

"I was thinking so," said Tom, moodily.

"I did my best. I told them you had been many years on the estate——"

"Forty-two."

"Just so. I said forty and upwards—that your children had grown up on it—that you were actually like a part of the property. I spoke of the hardship of turning a man at your time of life, with a helpless family too, upon the wide world. I even went so far as to say, that these were not the times for such examples; that there was a spirit abroad of regard for the poor man, a watchful inquiry into the evils of his condition, that made these 'clearances,' as they call them, unwise and impolitic, as well as cruel."

"An' what did they say to that?" asked Tom, abruptly.

"Laughed—laughed heartily."

"They laughed?"

"No—I am wrong," said Linton, quickly, "Kennyfeck did not laugh; on the contrary, he seemed grave, and observed that up at Drumcoologan——is there such a name?"

"Ay, and nice boys they're in it," said Tom, nodding.

"'Well, up at Drumcoologan,' said he, 'such a step would be more than dangerous.'

"'How do you mean?' said Mr. Cashel.

"'They'd take the law into their own hands,' replied Kennyfeck. —The man who would evict one of those fellows might as well make his will, if he wished to leave one behind him. They are determined fellows, whose fathers and grandfathers have lived and died on the land, and find it rather hard to understand how a bit of parchment with a big seal on it should have more force than kith and kindred."

"Did ould Kennyfeck say that?" asked Tom, with a glance of unutterable cunning.

"No," replied Linton, "that observation was mine, for really I was indignant at that summary system which disposes of a population as coolly as men change the cattle from one pasturage to another. Mr. Cashel, however, contented himself with a laugh, and such a laugh as, for his sake, I am right glad none of his unhappy tenantry were witness to.

"'You may do as you please down here, Sir,' said Kennyfeck—who, by the way, does not seem to be any friend of yours—'but the Drumcoologan fellows must be humoured.'

"'I will see that,' said Mr. Cashel, who, in his own hot-headed way, actually likes opposition, 'but we'll certainly begin with this fellow Keane.'

"'I suppose you'll give him the means to emigrate?' said I, addressing Kennyfeck.

"'We generally do in these cases,' said he.

"'I'll not give the scoundrel a farthing,' broke in Mr. Cashel. 'I took a dislike to him from the very hour I came here.' And then he went on to speak about the dirt and neglect about the gate-lodge, the ragged appearance of the children—even your own looks displeased him; in fact, I saw plainly that somehow you had contrived to make him your enemy, not merely of a few days' standing, but actually from the moment of his first meeting you. Kennyfeck, though not your friend, behaved better than I expected: he said that to turn you out was to leave you to starve; that there was no employment to be had in the country; that your children were all young and helpless; that you were not accustomed to daily labour; indeed, he made out your case to be a very hard one, and, backed as it was by myself, I hoped that we should have succeeded; but, as I said before, Mr. Cashel, for some reason of his own, or perhaps without any reason, hates you. He has resolved that out you shall go, and go you must!"

Keane said nothing, but sat moodily moving his foot backwards and forwards on the gravel.

"For Mr. Cashel's sake, I'm not sorry the lot has fallen upon a quiet-tempered fellow like yourself; there are plenty here who wouldn't bear the hardship so patiently."

Keane looked up, and the keen twinkle of his grey eyes seemed to read the other's very thoughts. Linton, so proof against the searching glances of the well-bred world, actually cowered under the vulgar stare of the peasant.

"So you think he's lucky that I'm not one of the Drumcoologan boys?" said Keane; and his features assumed a smile of almost insolent meaning.

"They're bold fellows, I've heard," said Linton, "and quick to resent an injury."

"Maybe there's others just as ready," said he, doggedly.

"Many are ready to feel one," said Linton, "that I'm well aware of. The difference is, that some men sit down under their sorrows, crestfallen and beaten; others rise above them, and make their injuries the road to fortune. And really, much as people say against this 'wild justice' of the people, when we consider that they have no other possible—that the law is ever against them—that their own right hand alone is their defence against oppression—one cannot wonder that many a tyrant landlord falls beneath the stroke of the ruined tenant, and particularly when the tyranny dies with the tyrant."

Keane listened greedily, but spoke not; and Linton went on:

"It so often happens that, as in the present case, by the death of

one man, the estate gets into Chancery; and then, it's nobody's affair who pays and who does not. Tenants then have as much right as the landlord used to have. As the rents have no owner, there's little trouble taken to collect them; and when any one makes a bold stand and refuses to pay, they let him alone, and just turn upon the others that are easier to deal with."

"That's the way it used to be here long ago," said Keane.

"Precisely so. You remember it yourself, before Mr. Cashel's time; and so it might be again, if he should try any harsh measures with those Drumcoologan fellows. Let me light my cigar from your pipe, Keane," said he; and, as he spoke, he laid down the pistol which he had still carried in his hand. Keane's eyes rested on the handsome weapon with an expression of stern intensity.

"Cashel would think twice of going up to that mountain barony to-morrow, if he but knew the price that lies upon his head. The hundreds of acres that to-day are a support to as many people,—and this day twelvemonth, perhaps, may lie barren and waste; while the poor peasants that once settled there have died of hunger, or wander friendless and houseless in some far-away country,—and all this to depend on the keen eye and the steady hand of any one man brave enough to pull a trigger!"

"Is he going to Drumcoologan to-morrow?" asked Keane, dryly.

"Yes; he is to meet Kennyfeck there, and go over the property with him, and on Tuesday evening he is to return here. Perhaps I may be able to put in another word for you, Tom, but I half fear it is hopeless."

"'Tis a lonely road that leads from Sheehan's Mill to the ould churchyard," said Keane, more bent upon following out his own fancies than in attending to Linton.

"So I believe," said Linton; "but Mr. Cashel cares little for its solitude; he rides always without a servant, and so little does he fear danger, that he never goes armed."

"I heard that afore," observed Tom, significantly.

"I have often remonstrated with him about it," said Linton. "I've said, 'Remember how many there are interested in your downfal. One bullet through your forehead is a lease for ever, rent-free, to many a man whose life is now one of grinding poverty.' But he is self-willed and obstinate. In his pride, he thinks himself a match for any man—as if a rifle bore and a percussion-lock like that, there, did not make the merest boy his equal! Besides, he will not bear in mind that his is a life exposed to a thousand risks; he has neither family nor connexions interested in him: were he to be found dead on the roadside to-morrow, there is neither father nor brother, nor uncle nor cousin, to take up the inquiry how he met his fate. The

coroner would earn his guinea or two, and there would be the end of it!"

"Did he ever do you a bad turn, Mr. Linton?" asked Keane, while he fixed his cold eyes on Linton with insolent effrontery.

"Me! injure me? Never. He would have shown me many a favour, but I would not accept of such. How came you to ask this question?"

"Because you seem so interested about his comin' home safe to-morrow evening," said Tom, with a dry laugh.

"So I am!" said Linton, with a smile of strange meaning.

"An' if he was to come to harm, sorry as you'd be, you couldn't help it, Sir?" said Keane, still laughing.

"Of course not; these mishaps are occurring every day, and will continue as long as the country remains in its present state of wretchedness."

Keane seemed to ponder over the last words, for he slouched his hat over his eyes, and sat with clasped hands and bent-down head for several minutes in silence. At last he spoke, but it was in a tone and with a manner whose earnestness contrasted strongly with his former levity.

"Can't we speak openly, Mr. Linton?—wouldn't it be best for both of us to say fairly what's inside of us this minit?"

"I'm perfectly ready," said Linton, seating himself beside him; "I do not desire anything better than to show my confidence in a man of courage like yourself."

"Then let us not be losin' our time," said the other, gruffly. "What's the job worth? that's the chat. What is it worth?"

"You are certainly a most practical speaker," said Linton, laughing in his own peculiar way, "and clear away preliminaries in a very summary fashion."

"If I'm not worth trustin', now," replied the other, doggedly, "ye'd betther have nothin' to say to me."

"I did not mean that, nor anything like it, Tom. I was only alluding to your straightforward, business-like way of treating a subject which less vigorously-minded men would approach timidly and carefully."

"Faix, I'd go up to him bouldly, if ye mane that!" cried the other, who misconceived the eulogy passed upon his candour.

"I know it—well I know it," said Linton, encouraging a humour he had thus casually evoked; for in the bloodshot eyes and flushed cheeks of the other, it was plain to see what was passing within him.

"Do ye want it done? Tell me that—be fair and above-boord with me—do you want it done?"

Linton was silent; but a slight, an almost imperceptible motion of his brows made the reply.

"And now, what's it worth?" resumed Tom.

"To *you*," said Linton, speaking slowly, "it is worth much—everything. It is all the difference between poverty, suffering, and a gaol, and a life of ease and comfort either here or in America. Your little farm, that you hold at present by the will, or rather the caprice, of your landlord, becomes your own for ever; when I say for ever, I mean what is just as good, since the estate will be thrown back into Chancery; and it is neither *your* children nor mine will see the end of that."

"That's no answer to *me*," said Keane, fixing his cold, steady stare on Linton's face. "I want to know—and I won't ax it again—what is it worth to *you?*"

"To *me!*—to *me!*" said Linton, starting. "How could it be worth anything to *me?*"

"You know that best yourself," said Tom, sulkily.

"I am neither the heir to his estate, nor one of his remote kindred. If I see a fine property going to ruin, and the tenantry treated like galley-slaves, I may, it is true, grieve over it; I may also perceive what a change—a total and happy change—a mere accident might work; for, after all, just think of the casualties that every day brings forth——"

"I hav'n't time for these thoughts, now," muttered Tom.

"Always to the point—always thinking of the direct question!" said Linton, smiling.

"'Tisn't yer Honer's failin', anyhow," said Tom, laughing sardonically.

"You shall not say that of me, Tom," said Linton, affecting to relish the jocularity; "I'll be as prompt and ready as yourself. I'll wager you ten sovereigns in gold—there they are—that I can keep a secret as well as you can."

As he spoke, he threw down the glittering pieces upon the step on which they sat.

The peasant's eyes were bent upon the money with a fierce and angry expression, less betokening desire than actual hate. As he looked at them, his cheek grew red, and then pale, and red once more; his broad chest rose and fell like a swelling wave, and his bony fingers clasped each other in a rigid grasp.

"There are twenty more where these came from," said Linton, significantly.

"That's a high price—devil a lie in it!" muttered Tom, thoughtfully.

Linton spoke not, but seemed to let the charm work.

"A high price, but the 'dhrop' in Limerick is higher," said Tom, with a grin.

"Perhaps it may be," rejoined Linton, carelessly; "though I don't perceive how the fact can have any interest for you or me."

"Be Gorra, ye're a cowld man, anyhow," said Keane, his savage nature struck with admiring wonder at the unmoved serenity of Linton's manner.

"I'm a determined one," said Linton, who saw the necessity of impressing his companion; "and with such alone would I wish to act."

"And where would you be, after it was all over, Sir?"

"Here, where I am at present, assisting the Magistrates to scour the country — searching every cabin at Drumcoologan — draining ditches to discover the weapon, and arresting every man that killed a pig and got blood on his corduroys for the last fortnight."

"And where would *I* be?" asked Keane.

"Here too; exactly where you sit this moment, quietly waiting till the outcry was over. Nor need that make you impatient. I have said already there is neither wife, nor sister, nor brother, nor child to take up the pursuit. There are forty people in the great house, yonder, and there wouldn't be four of them left two hours after it was known, nor one out of the four that would give himself the trouble of asking how it happened."

"An' them's *Gentlemen!*" said Keane, closing his lips and shaking his head sententiously.

Linton arose; he did not over-fancy the turn of reflection Tom's remark implied: it looked too like the expression of a general condemnation of his class—at the very moment, too, when he was desirous of impressing him with the fullest trust and confidence in his own honour.

"I believe it's safer to have nothin' to do with it," muttered Keane.

"As you please, friend," replied Linton; "I never squeeze any man's conscience. *You* know best what your own life is."

"Hard enough, that's what it is," said the other, bitterly.

"You can also make a guess what it will be in future, when you leave this."

A deep groan was all that he gave for answer.

"For all that *I* know, you may have many friends who'll not see your wife and children begging along the roads, or sitting in a hole scooped out of a clay ditch, without food or fire, waiting for the fever to finish what famine has begun. You haven't far to seek for what I mean; about two hundred yards from that gate yonder, there's a group exactly like it."

"Ye're a terrible man, that's the truth," said Tom, as he wiped the big drops of perspiration from his forehead. "Be Gorra, I never seed your like afore!"

"I told you that I was a *determined* man," said Linton, sternly; "and I'm sorry to see that's not what I should say of *you*." He moved a step or two as he spoke, and then turning carelessly back, added, "Leave that money for me at 'The House,' this evening; I don't wish to carry gold about me on the roads here." And with this negligent remark he departed.

Linton sauntered carelessly away; nothing in his negligent air and carriage to show that he was not lounging to kill the weary hours of a winter's day. No sooner, however, had he turned an angle of the road than he entered the wood, and with cautious steps retraced his way, till he stood within a few paces of where Keane yet sat, still and motionless.

His worn hat was pressed down upon his brows, his hands were firmly clasped, and his head bent so as to conceal his features; and in this attitude he remained as rigidly impassive as though he were seized with a catalepsy. A few heavy drops of rain fell, and then a low growling roar of thunder followed, but he heeded not these signs of coming storm. The loud cawing of the rooks as they hastened homeward filled the air, but he never once lifted his head to watch them. Another crash of thunder was heard, and suddenly the rain burst forth in torrents. Swooping along in heavy drifts, it blackened the very atmosphere, and rushed in rivulets down the gravel walk; but still he sat, while the pelting storm penetrated his frail garments and soaked them through. Nor was it till the water lay in pools at his feet that he seemed conscious of the hurricane. Then rising suddenly, he shook himself roughly, and entered the house.

Linton's eyes were earnestly fixed upon the stone—he crept nearer to observe it. THE MONEY WAS GONE.

CHAPTER XXII.

The mask is falling fast.—HAROLD.

THE day of the great masquerade arrived; and, from an early hour, the whole household was astir in preparing for the occasion. The court-yard was thronged with carriages of various sorts. Confectioners from London, table-deckers from Paris, were there, accompanied by all the insignia of their callings. Great lumbering packing-cases were strewn about; while rich stuffs, rare exotics, and costly delicacies littered the stone benches, and even lay upon the pavement, in all the profusion of haste and recklessness. To see the rare and rich articles which were heaped on every side, almost suggested the notion that it

was some gorgeous mansion which was put to pillage. There was that, too, in the lounging insolence of the servants, as they went, that favoured the illusion. The wanton waste exhibited everywhere was the very triumph of that vulgar and vindictive spirit which prompts the followers of a spendthrift master to speed the current of his ruin. Such would seem to be the invariable influence that boundless profusion exercises on the mind; and it is thus that affluence, unchastened by taste, unruled by principle, is always a corrupter!

A light travelling-carriage, with a few articles of travelling use attached, stood in the midst of all this confusion; and shortly after day-dawn two gentlemen issued from the house, and taking their seats, drove hastily forth, and at full speed passed down the avenue towards the high road.

These were Cashel and Mr. Kennyfeck, who had made an appointment to meet Mr. Hoare at Killaloe and proceed with him to Drumcoologan, on which portion of the estate it was proposed to raise a considerable sum by mortgage.

Some observation of Mr. Kennyfeck upon the wasteful exhibition of the scene in the court-yard, was met by a sharp and angry reply from Cashel; and these were both overheard as they issued forth—vague words, spoken thoughtlessly at the time, but to be remembered afterwards with a heavier significance than the speakers could have anticipated! As they hastened along, little was said on either side; the trifling irritation of the first moment created a reserve, which deepened into actual coldness, as each following out his own thoughts took no heed of his companion's.

Kennyfeck's mind was full of sad and gloomy forebodings. The reckless outlay he had witnessed for weeks back was more than a princely fortune could sustain. The troops of useless servants, the riotous disorder of the household, the unchecked, unbridled waste on every side, demanded supplies to raise which they were already reduced to loans at usurious interest. What was to come of such a career, save immediate and irretrievable ruin!

As for Cashel, his reveries were even darker still. The whirlwind current of events seemed to carry him onward without any power of resistance. He saw his fortune wasted—his character assailed—his heart-offered proposal rejected,—all at once, and as if by the influence of some evil destiny. Vigorous resolutions for the future warred with fears lest that they were made too late, and he sat with closed eyes and compressed lips, silent and sunk in meditation.

Leaving them, therefore, to pursue a journey on which their companionship could scarcely afford much pleasure to the reader, let us turn to one who, whatever his other defects, rarely threw away the moments of his life on unavailing regrets: this was Mr. Linton. If he was greatly disappointed by the information he gleaned when

overhearing the conversation between Cashel and the Doctor, he did not suffer his anger either to turn him from his path, or distract him from his settled purpose.

"To-day for ambition!" said he, "to-morrow revenge!"

Too well accustomed to obstacles to be easily thwarted, he recognised life as a struggle wherein the combatant should never put off his armour.

"She must and shall accept me as her husband; on that I am determined. A great game, and a glorious stake, shall not be foiled for a silly girl's humour. Were she less high-flown in her notions, and with more of the 'world' about her, I might satisfy her scruples, that, of her affections—her heart as she would call it—there is no question here. 'Je suis bon prince'—I never coerce my liege's loyalty. As to the old man, his dotage takes the form of intrepidity, so that it might be unsafe to use menace with him. The occasion must suggest the proper tactic."

And with this shrewd resolve he set forth to pay his visit at the cottage. If in his step and air, as he went, none could have read the lover's ardour, there was that in his proud carriage and glancing eye that bespoke a spirit revelling in its own sense of triumph.

While Mr. Linton is thus pursuing his way, let us use the privilege of our craft by anticipating him, and taking a peep at that cottage interior in which he is so soon to figure. Old Mr. Corrigan had arisen from his bed weary and tired; a night of sleepless care weighed heavily on him; and he sat at his untasted breakfast with all the outward signs of a sick man.

Mary Leicester, too, was pale and sad-looking; and although she tried to wear her wonted smile, and speak with her accustomed tones, the heavy eyelids and the half-checked sighs that broke from her at times betrayed how sad was the spirit from which they came.

"I have been dreaming of that old nunnery at Bruges all night, Mary," said her grandfather, after a long and unbroken silence; "and you cannot think what a hold it has taken of my waking thoughts. I fancied that I was sitting in the little parlour, waiting to see you, and that, at last, a dark veiled figure appeared at the grille, and beckoned me to approach. I hastened to do so, my heart fluttering with I know not what mixture of hope and fear—the hope, it might be you, and then the fear, stronger than even hope, that I should read sadness in that sweet face—sorrow, Mary—regret for leaving that world you never were to see more."

"And was it me, dearest Papa?"

"No, Mary," said he, with a lower and more meaning tone, "it was another, one whom I never saw before. She came to tell me that—that"—he faltered, and wiping a tear from his eyes, made an effort to seem calm—"that I had lost you, darling! lost by a separation

darker and more terrible than even the iron bars of the nunnery can make. And although I bethought me that you had but gone there, whither I myself was hastening, I felt sorrow-struck by the tidings. I had clung so long to the hope of leaving you behind me here, to enjoy that world of which all your affectionate care has denied you enjoyment—to know how, amidst its troubles and reverses, there are healing springs of love that recompense its heaviest inflictions—I cherished this wish so long, so ardently, that I could not face the conviction which told me it should never be."

"Dearest Papa, remember this was but a dream; bethink you, for an instant, that it was all unreal; that I am beside you, my hand in yours, my head upon your shoulder; that we are not parted, nor ever shall be."

The tone of deep fervour in which she spoke drew tears from the old man's eyes, and he turned away to hide them.

"It was but a dream, as you say, Mary; but do not my waking thoughts conjure up a future to the full as gloomy? A few months, at furthest, a year or so more—less sanguine prophets would perhaps say weeks—and where shall I be? and where you, Mary?"

The old man's grief could no longer be restrained, and it was in a perfect burst of sorrow the last words came forth. She would have spoken, but she knew not from what source to draw consolation. The future, which to his eyes looked dark and louring, presented an aspect no less gloomy to her own; and her only remedy against its depressing influence was to make her present cares occupy her mind, to the exclusion of every other thought.

"And yet, Mary," said he, recovering something of his habitual tone, "there is an alternative—one which, if we could accept of it from choice as freely as we might adopt it from convenience, would solve our difficulties at once. My heart misgives me, dearest, as I approach it. I tremble to think how far my selfishness may bias you—how thoughts of *me*, old and worthless as I am, may rise uppermost in your breast and gain the mastery, where other and very different feelings should prevail. I have ever been candid with you, my child, and I have reaped all the benefit of my frankness; let me then tell you all. An offer has been made for your hand, Mary, by one who, while professing the utmost devotion to you, has not forgotten your old grandfather. He asks that he should be one of us, Mary—a new partner in our firm—a new member in the little group around our hearth. He speaks like one who knew the ties that bind us most closely—he talks of our home here as we ourselves might do—he has promised that we shall never leave it, too. Does your heart tell you whom I mean, Mary? If not, if you have not already gone before me in all I have been saying, his visions of happiness are baseless fabrics. Be candid with me, as I have ever been with you. It is a

question on which everything of the future hangs; say if you guess of whom I speak."

Mary Leicester's cheek grew scarlet; she tried to speak, but could not; but with a look far more eloquent than words, she pressed the old man's hand to her lips, and was silent.

"I was right then, Mary; you have guessed him. Now, my sweet child, there is one other confession you must make me, or leave me to divine it from that crimson cheek. Have his words found an echo in your heart?"

The old man drew her more closely to his side, and passed his arm around her as he spoke; while she, with heaving bosom and bent-down head, seemed struggling with an agitation she could not master. At last she said:

"You have often told me, Papa, that disproportion of fortune was an insurmountable obstacle to married happiness; that the sense of perfect equality in condition was the first requisite of that self-esteem which must be the basis of an affection free and untrammelled from all unworthy considerations."

"Yes, dearest; I believe this to be true."

"Then, surely, the present is not a case in point; for while there is wealth and influence on one side, there are exactly the opposites on the other. If *he* be in a position to make his choice among the great and titled of the land, *my* destiny lies among the lowly and the humble. What disparity could be greater?"

"When I spoke of equality," said the old man, "I referred rather to that of birth and lineage than to any other. I meant that social equality by which uniformity of tastes and habits are regulated. There is no *mésalliance* where good blood runs on both sides."

This was the tenderest spot in the old man's nature; the pride of family surviving every successive stroke of fortune, or, rather, rising superior to them all.

"I thought, moreover," said Mary, "that in his preference of me there was that suddenness which savoured more of caprice than deep conviction. How should I reckon upon its lasting? What evidence have I that he cares for the qualities which will not change in me, and not for those which spring from youth and happiness?—for I am happy, dearest Pa; so happy that, with all our trials and difficulties, I often accuse myself of levity—insensibility even—feeling so light-hearted as I do."

The old man looked at her with rapture, and then pressed his lips upon her forehead.

"From all this, then, I gather, Mary," said he, smiling archly, "that, certain misgivings apart, the proposition is not peculiarly disagreeable to you?"

"I am sure I have not said so," said she, confusedly.

"No, dearest; only looked it. But stay, I heard the wicket close —there is some one coming. I expected Tiernay on a matter of business. Leave us together, child; and, till we meet, think over what we've been saying. Remember, too, that although I would not influence your decision, my heart would be relieved of its heaviest load if this could be."

Mary Leicester arose hastily and retired, too happy to hide, in the secrecy of her own room, that burst of emotion which oppressed her, and whose utterance she could no longer restrain.

Scarcely had she gone, when Linton crossed the grass-plot, and entered the cottage. A gentle tap at the door of the drawing-room announced him, and he entered. A more acute observer than Mr. Corrigan might have remarked that the deferential humility so characteristic of his manner was changed for an air of more purpose-like determination. He came to carry a point by promptness and boldness; and already his bearing announced the intention.

After a few words of customary greeting, and an inquiry more formal than cordial for Miss Leicester's health, he assumed an air of solemn purpose, and said,

"You will not accuse me of undue impatience, my dear Mr. Corrigan, nor think me needlessly pressing, if I tell you that I have come here this morning to learn the answer to my late proposition. Circumstances have occurred at the Hall to make my remaining there, even another day, almost impossible. Cashel's last piece of conduct is of such a nature as to make his acquaintance as derogatory as his friendship."

"What was it?"

"Simply this. Lord Kilgoff has at length discovered, what all the world has known for many a day back; and, in his passionate indignation, the poor old man has been seized with a paralytic attack."

Mr. Corrigan passed his hand across his brow, as if to clear away some terrible imagination, and sat then pale, silent, and attentive, as Linton went on:

"The most heartless is yet to come! While this old man lies stretched upon his bed—insensible and dying—this is the time Cashel selects to give a great entertainment, a ball, to above a thousand people. It is almost too much for belief—so I feel it myself. The palsied figure of his victim—his victim do I say? there are two: that miserable woman, who sits as paralysed by terror as he is by disease —might move any man from such levity; but Cashel is superior to such timidity; he fancies, I believe, that this ruffian hardihood is manliness, that brutal insensibility means courage, and so he makes his house the scene of an orgie, when his infamy has covered it with shame. I see how this affects you, Sir. It is a theme on which I

would never have touched did it not concern my own fortunes. For me, the acquaintance of such a man is no longer possible. For the sake of that unhappy woman, whom I knew in better days—to cover, as far as may be, the exposure that sooner or later must follow her fault—I am still here. You will, therefore, forgive my importunity if I ask if Miss Leicester has been informed of my proposal, and with what favour she deigns to regard it."

"I have told my granddaughter, Sir," said the old man, tremulously; "we have talked together on the subject; and while I am not able to speak positively of her sentiments towards you, it strikes me that they are assuredly not unfavourable. The point is, however, too important to admit a doubt: with your leave, we will confer together once again."

"Might I not be permitted to address the young lady myself, Sir. The case too nearly concerns all my future happiness to make me neglect whatever may conduce to its accomplishment."

The old man hesitated; he knew not well what reply to make. At length he said,

"Be it so, Mr. Linton; you shall have this permission. I only ask, that before you do so, we should clearly and distinctly understand each other. *We* are of the world, and can discuss its topics, man to man. With *her*, the matter rests on other and very different grounds."

"Of course; so I understand the permission, Sir," said Linton, courteously, "on the distinct understanding that her acceptance alone is wanting to fill up the measure of my wishes."

"Is it necessary that I should repeat that I am totally destitute of fortune—that the humble means I possess expire with me, and that I am as poor in influence as in all else?"

"I have sufficient for both, Sir, for all that moderate wishes can desire. Pray do not add a word upon the subject."

"I must be explicit, Mr. Linton, however wearisome to you the theme. You will pardon an old man's prolixity, in consideration for the motives which prompt it. We have absolutely nothing of our once powerful family, save the name and the escutcheon—mementos to remind us of our fall! They did, indeed, say, some time back, that our title to the estate afforded strong grounds for litigation—that there were points of considerable importance——"

"May I interrupt you, Sir?" said Linton, laying his hand on Corrigan's arm. "A subject so full of regrets to *you* can never be a pleasing topic to *me*. I am fully as rich as a man like myself could desire; and I trust to personal exertions for whatever I may wish to add in the way of ambition."

"And with good reason, Sir," said Corrigan, proudly. "There are no failures to those who unite honesty of purpose with fine abilities.

I will not add a word. Go—speak to my granddaughter: I tell you frankly my best wishes go with you."

Linton smiled a look of deep gratitude, and moved towards the door.

"One second more," cried Corrigan, as the other laid his hand on the lock; "it may soon be, that, as a member of our family, you would have the right to express a will on the subject we have been talking of. I would wish to say, that, as I have abandoned all desire to contest this question, I should equally expect the same line of conduct from you."

"Can you doubt it, Sir—or is it necessary that I should give my promise?"

"I hope and trust not. But having myself given a written pledge, under my own hand and seal, to Mr. Cashel, surrendering all right and title to this estate——"

"Who gave this?" said Linton, turning suddenly round, and relinquishing his hold upon the lock of the door. "Who gave this?"

"I gave it."

"To whom?"

"To Mr. Cashel, in the presence of his agent."

"When?" exclaimed Linton, from whose pale features, now, intense agitation had banished all disguise. "When did you give it?"

"Within a fortnight."

"And this document—this release, was formal and explicit?"

"Perfectly so. I knew enough of law to make it obligatory. I stated the conditions for which it was given—certain concessions that Mr. Cashel had lately granted me, respecting this small property."

Linton sat down, and covered his face with both hands. The trouble of his feelings had carried him far away from all thought of concealment, and of the part which so long he had been playing. Indeed, so insensible was he to every consideration save one, that he forgot Corrigan's presence—forgot where he was; and in the paroxysm of his baffled purpose, muttered half aloud broken curses upon the insane folly of the old man's act.

"I am compelled to remind you, Sir, that I am a listener," said Mr. Corrigan, whose face, suffused with a flush of anger, showed that the insulting remarks had been overheard by him.

"And this was done without advice or consultation with any one?" said Linton, not heeding the last remark, nor the look that accompanied it.

"I was free then, Sir, to speak my gratitude, as I now am to utter my indignation that you should dare to canvass *my* acts and question *my* motives, both of which are above your control."

Linton stared at him almost vacantly; his own thoughts, and not the old man's words, had possession of his mind. With a rapidity of computation, in which few were his equals, he ran over all the vary-

ing chances of success which had accompanied his game—the pains he had taken to avert all causes of failure—the unwearying attention he had given to every minute point and doubtful issue—and now, here, at the very last, came the ruin of all his plans, and wreck of all his hopes.

"You have said enough—more than enough, Sir—to show me how disinterested were the views in which you sought my granddaughter in marriage," said Corrigan, haughtily; "nor would it much surprise me, now, were I to discover that he who is so skilful a double-dealer, may be no less expert as a calumniator. I will beg you to leave my house this instant."

"Not so fast, Sir," said Linton, assuming a seat, and at once regaining that insolent composure for which he was noted; "I have not that generous warmth of character which is so conspicuous in *you*. I have never given Mr. Cashel a release of any obligation I possess upon him. This house is *mine*, Sir—mine by legal transfer and right; and it is *you* who are the intruder!"

The old man staggered backwards, and leaned against the wall—a clammy perspiration covered his face and forehead, and he seemed sick to the very death. It was some time before he could even utter a word; and then, as with clasped hands and uplifted eyes he spoke, the fervour of his words told that they were heart-spoken. "Thank God for this! but for it, and I had given my child to a scoundrel!"

"Scarcely polite, Sir, and, perhaps, scarcely politic," said Linton, with his treacherous half-smile. "It would be as well to bear in mind how we stand toward each other."

"As enemies, open and declared," cried Corrigan, fiercely.

"I should say as creditor and debtor," said Linton; "but probably we are speaking in synonyms. Now, Sir, a truce to this altercation, for which I have neither time nor taste. Tell me frankly, can you obtain repossession of this unlucky document which in an ill-starred moment you parted with? If you can, and will do so, I am willing to resume the position I occupied towards you half an hour ago. This is plain speaking, I am aware; but how much better than to bandy mock courtesies, in which neither of us have any faith! We are both men of the world—I, at least, have no shame in saying that I am such. Let us then be frank and business-like."

"You have at last filled up the measure of your insults, Sir," said Corrigan, fiercely; "you have dared to speak of me as of yourself."

"It is a compliment I have not paid a great many, notwithstanding," replied Linton, with a languid insolence of manner that contrasted strongly with the other's natural warmth; "and there are people in this world would accept it as a flattery; but once more I say, let us abandon this silly squabble. Will you, or will you not, accept my proposal? I am ready to purchase the wreck as she lies

upon the rocks, wave-tossed and shattered. Is it not better to give me the chance of floating her, than see her go to pieces before your eyes, and drift piecemeal into the wide ocean ?"

"Leave me, Sir—leave me!" was all the old man could utter.

"If I take you at your word," said Linton, rising, "remember that the last gleam of hope for you departs when I close that door behind me. I warn you that I am little given to relenting."

"Insolent scoundrel!" cried Corrigan, carried away by indignation.

"Unhandsomely spoken, old gentleman; such words are ill-befitting grey hairs and palsied hands; but I forgive them. I repeat, however, my nature is not over-disposed to forgiveness. An injury with me is like a malady that leaves its mark behind it. The day may come when all your entreaties, aided even by the fair supplications of a more gentle penitent——"

"If you dare, Sir!" cried Corrigan, interrupting; and the insolence —schooled and practised in many a trial—quailed before the look and gesture of the old man.

"You shall have your choice, then," said Linton. "From henceforth you will have to confess that I am not a secret enemy." And so saying, he opened the sash which led into the garden and passed out, leaving Corrigan overcome by emotion and almost panic-stricken.

The deceptions which are practised on youth are seldom attended with lasting influence; but when they fall upon a heart chilled and saddened by age they are stunning in their effect, and seldom, or never, admit of relief.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Can sight and hearing—even touch, deceive?
Or, is this real?

PLAY.

PROBABLY, in all his varied life, Cashel had never passed a day less to his satisfaction than that spent at Drumcoologan. His mind, already tortured by anxieties, was certainly not relieved by the spectacle that presented itself to his eyes. The fearful condition of a neglected Irish property, where want, crime, disease, and destitution were combined, was now seen by him for the first time. There was one predominant expression on and over everything—"Despair." The almost roofless cabin—the scarce-clad children—the fevered father stretched upon his bed of clay—the starving mother, with a dying infant at her bosom—passed before him like the dreadful images

of a dream. And then he was to hear from his agent, that these were evils for which no remedy existed; "there had always been fever in Ireland;" "dirt they were used to;" want of clothing had become "natural" to them; falsehood was the first article of their creed; their poverty was only fictitious; this one, owned several cows; the other, had money in a savings bank; and so on. In fact, he had to hear that every estate had its plague-spot of bad characters, where crime and infamy found a refuge; and that it might be poor morality, but good policy, to admit of the custom.

Confused by contradictory statements, wearied by explanations, to understand which nothing short of a lifelong should have passed in studying the people—imposed upon by some, unjust towards others—he listened to interminable discussions without one gleam of enlightenment—and what is far worse, without one ray of hope; the only piece of satisfaction he derived from the visit being, that Hoare had consented to advance a sum of money upon mortgage of the property, which, in his secret soul, Cashel resolved should be a purchase, and not a mere loan. The object he had in view was to buy off Linton's claim upon the cottage; and having settled all his most pressing debts, to retire for some years to the Continent, till a sufficient sum should have accumulated to permit him to recommence his life as a country gentleman, in a manner and with views very different from what he had hitherto done. He hoped, by travel, to improve his mind and extend his knowledge; he trusted that, by observing the condition of the peasant in different countries of Europe, he might bring back with him certain suggestions applicable to his own tenantry; and, at all events, he determined that the resources of his large fortune should no longer be squandered in meaningless debauch, so long as real destitution and grinding misery lay at his very door. He made many a good and noble resolve, and, like most men in such cases, with youth on their side, he was impatient to begin to act upon them.

It was, then, with a feeling like that of a liberated prisoner, he heard from Mr. Kennyfeck, that although Mr. Hoare and himself had yet many preliminaries to arrange, which might detain them several hours longer, he might now return homeward to Tubbermore, where his company were doubtless in anxious expectation of his coming. There were two roads which led to Drumcoologan: one, was a species of carriage-road, by which they had come that morning; the other, was a mere bridle-path over the mountain, and though shorter in mileage, required fully as much time, if not more, to travel. Refusing the assistance of a guide, and preferring to be alone, he set out by himself, and on foot, to pursue the way homeward.

It was the afternoon of a sharp, clear winter's day, when the bracing air and the crisp atmosphere elevate the spirits, and make ex-

ercise the most pleasurable of stimulants; and as Cashel went along, he began to feel a return of that buoyancy of heart which had been so peculiarly his own in former days. The future, to which his hope already lent its bright colours, was rapidly erasing the past, and in the confidence of his youth he was fashioning a hundred schemes of life to come.

The path along which he travelled lay between two bleak and barren mountains, and followed the course of a little rivulet for several miles. There was not a cabin to be seen; not a trace of vegetation brightened the dreary picture; not a sheep, nor even a goat, wandered over the wild expanse. It was a solitude the most perfect that could be conceived. Roland often halted to look around him, and each time his eye wandered to a lofty peak of rock on the very summit of the mountain, and where something stood which he fancied might be a human figure. Although gifted with strong power of vision, the great height prevented his feeling any degree of certainty; so that he abandoned the effort, and proceeded on his way for miles without again thinking on the subject. At last, as he was nearing the exit of the glen, he looked up once more: the cliff was now perceptible in its entire extent, and the figure was gone! He gave no further thought to the circumstance, but seeing that the day was declining fast, increased his speed, in order to reach the high road before night closed in. Scarcely had he proceeded thus more than half a mile, when he perceived, full in front of him, about a couple of hundred yards distant, a man seated upon a stone beside the pathway. Cashel had been too long a wanderer in the wild regions of the "Far West," not to regard each new comer as at least a possible enemy. His Prairie experience had taught him that men do not take their stand in lonely and unfrequented spots without an object; and so, without halting, which might have awakened suspicion in the other, he managed to slacken his pace somewhat, and thus gave himself more time for thought. He well knew that, in certain parts of Ireland, landlord murder had become frequent; and although he could not charge himself with any act which should point him out as a victim, his was not a mind to waste in casuistry the moments that should be devoted more practically. He was perfectly unarmed, and this consideration rendered him doubly cautious. The matter, however, had but few issues. To go back would be absurd; to halt where he was, still more so. There was nothing, then, for it but to advance; and he continued to do so, calmly and warily, till about twenty paces from the rock where the other sat, still and immovable. Then it was that, dropping on one knee, the stranger threw back a cloak that he wore, and took a deliberate aim at him.

The steady precision of the attitude was enough to show Cashel that the man was well versed in the use of fire-arms. The distance

was short, also, and the chance of escape, consequently, the very smallest imaginable. Roland halted, and crossing his arms upon his breast, stood to receive the fire exactly as he would have done in a duel. The other never moved: his dark eye glanced along the barrel without blinking, and his iron grasp held the weapon still pointed at Cashel's heart.

"Fire!" cried Roland, with the loud utterance he would have used in giving the word of command; and scarcely was it spoken when the rifle was flung to the earth, and, springing to his feet, a tall and muscular man advanced with an outstretched hand to meet him.

"Don't you know me yet, Roland?" cried a deep voice in Spanish; "not remember your comrade?"

"What!" exclaimed Cashel, as he rubbed his eyes and shook himself as if to ensure he was not dreaming. "This is surely impossible! you cannot be my old friend and shipmate Enrique!"

"That am I, my boy," cried the other, throwing his arms around him, and embracing him in true Mexican fashion, "your own old comrade for many a year, who has sailed with you, fought with you, drunk with you, played with you, and swears now that he wishes for nothing but the old times over again."

"But how came you here? and when? By what chance did you discover me?" said Roland, as he clasped the other's hand in both his own.

"'Tis a long story, 'amigo mio,' but you shall have it all, one of these days."

"True; there will be time enough to tell it, for you shall not leave me, Enrique. I was longing for a face of an old comrade once again —one of the old *Esmeralda's*, with whom my happiest days were passed."

"I can well believe it," said Enrique; "and it was to see if wealth had not sapped your courage, as I know it has your high spirits, that I took aim at you, a while ago. Had you quailed, Roland, I almost think I could have pulled the trigger."

"And I had well deserved it, too," said Cashel, sternly. "But let us hasten forward. Enrique, I am longing to see an old friend beneath my roof—longing to see you seated opposite to me, and answering the hundred questions about old friends and times that are thronging to my mind."

"No, Roland, my way lies thither," said he, pointing towards the west; "I have been too long your guest already."

"How do you mean?" cried Roland, in amazement.

"Simply, that for seven weeks I have lived beneath your roof. The narrative is too long for a moment like this; but enough if I tell you that it was a plot of Maritaña's, who, had I not acceded to the notion, would have disguised herself and come hither, to watch and see with

her own eyes how you played the great man. To save her from such a step, when all persuasion failed, I came here as the sailor Giovanni."

"You, Giovanni?"

"Ay, Roland, and if wealth had not blinded you so effectually, you had soon seen through the counterfeit. As Giovanni, I saw your daily life—the habits of your household—the sterling worth and fidelity of the men you made your friends; and let me tell you, Cashel, our old associates of the 'Villa de las Noches' were men of unblemished honour compared with those well-bred companions of your prosperity. Often and often have I been upon the brink of declaring myself, and then, have I held back, sometimes from a curiosity to see the game played out, sometimes anxious to know how far this course of treachery might be carried on without its awakening your suspicions. At length, I actually grew weary of seeing you the 'dupe.' I almost ceased to feel interest in one who could be imposed upon with such slender artifice. I forgot, Roland, that I was the looker-on, and not the player of the game. It was in this mood of mind I had half determined to leave your house, and suffer you to go down the stream as chance might pilot, when I discovered that treachery had taken a higher flight than I suspected; and that, not content with the slow breaching of your fortune by play and reckless waste, your utter ruin, your very beggary had been compassed!"

Cashel started back, and grasped the other's arm tightly, but never spoke.

"Are you still so infatuated as not to guess the traitor?" cried Enrique.

"You mean Linton?"

"I do."

"But are you certain of what you speak? or do you mistake the cunning devices of a subtle mind for the darker snares of downright treachery?"

"You shall hear," said Enrique. "Sit down here upon this stone. I have some hours before I sail. The vessel leaves Limerick to-morrow for Naples; and thither I am bound, for Maritaña is there. No, no, my dear friend, you must not ask me to stay; I have remained longer than I ought; but I waited for the time when I might be able to recompense you for having thus played the spy upon your actions. Hear me out patiently now, for that hour is come."

As Cashel seated himself beside Enrique, it was only by a great effort he could compose himself to listen, when a hundred questions came thronging to his mind, and doubts and inquiries, of every possible kind, demanded explanation.

"I will not waste your time nor my own by dwelling upon your losses at play. I may one day or other amuse you, by showing how little chance our old Columbian friends would have had against these

honourable and right honourable swindlers. That you should be the mark for artifice, is natural enough; but I have little patience with your blindness in not seeing it. From the first hour of your arrival here, Linton set a watch upon your doings. Phillis was his principal agent. But even upon him Linton had his spies—myself among the number. Ay, Roland, I was perhaps the only one he trusted! As I have said, Linton marked every step you took, heard all you said, read every letter that reached you. Every night it was his practice, at a certain hour when you repaired to the cottage, to enter your dressing-room by a secret door that led from the theatre; and then, at his leisure, he ransacked your papers, examined your correspondence, searched through all the documents which concerned your estate, possessing himself of information on every point of your circumstances. Nor was this all; he abstracted papers of value from amongst them, well knowing the carelessness of your habits, and with what little risk of detection his boldest darings were attended. I studied him long and closely. For a great while I could not detect the clue to his proceedings. I even at one time ascribed all to jealousy, for he *was* jealous of the favour by which Lady Kilgoff distinguished you. This, however, could not explain all I saw, for it was on the subject of your fortune his deepest interest was excited. At last came his first move, and the whole game disclosed itself before me. There lay upon your table for several days a deed concerning the cottage where the old gentleman resided with his daughter. This, Linton, to my surprise, did not take away, but simply contented himself by placing it in such a prominent position as would in all likelihood attract your notice. To no purpose, however; you would seem to have tossed it over, among other papers, without attention. He went a step further; he broke the seal, and left the enclosure half open. Still it lay unminded. The next night he carried it off, but you never missed it."

"Nor was it of any consequence," broke in Cashel. "It was never perfected, and had neither my signature nor my seal."

"Are you certain of that?" said Enrique, smiling dubiously.

"I could swear to it."

"Look here, then," said the other, as he drew forth a pocket-book, from the folds of which he took a heavy package, and opened it before Cashel. "Is that name, there—that signature, 'Roland Cashel,' yours?"

Cashel stared at the writing without speaking; his hands trembled as they held the paper, and his very frame shook with agitation.

"I never wrote it!" cried he, at last, with an effort almost convulsive.

"Yet, see if it be not witnessed; there are the names and addresses of two persons."

"It is a forgery; a clever one, I own, but still a forgery. I never signed that paper—never saw it till this instant."

"Well," said Enrique, slowly, "I scarcely expected so much of memory from you. It is true as you say, you never did sign it; but *I* did."

"You, Enrique?—you?" exclaimed Cashel.

"Yes, Roland. I accompanied Linton to Limerick at his request, dressed to personate *you*. We were met at the hotel by two persons summoned to witness this act of signature; of the meaning of which I, of course, appeared to know nothing—nor did I, indeed, till long afterwards, discover the real significance."

"And how came you by it eventually?"

"By imitating Linton's own proceedings. I saw that for security he placed it in an iron box, which he carried with him to Limerick, and which contained another document of apparently far greater value. This casket was long enough in my company on that morning to enable me to take a model of the key, by which I afterwards had another made, and by means of which I obtained possession of both these papers—for here is the other."

"And when did you take them?"

"About an hour ago. I saw that this drama was drawing to a finish. I knew that Linton's schemes were advancing more rapidly than I could follow; his increased confidence of manner proved to me his consciousness of strength, and yet I could neither unravel his cunning nor detect his artifice. Nothing then remained but to carry off these papers; and, as the hour of my own departure drew nigh, there was no time to lose. There they are both. I hope you will be a more careful depositary than you have been hitherto."

"And where is Linton?" cried Roland, his passionate eagerness for revenge mastering every other feeling.

"Still your guest. He dines and does the honours of your board to-day, as he did yesterday, and will to-morrow."

"Nay, by my oath, that he will never do more! The man is no coward, and he will not refuse me the *amende* I'll ask for."

"Were he on board, it is a loop and a leap I'd treat him to," said Enrique.

"So should I, perhaps," said Cashel, "but the circumstances change with the place. Here he shall have the privilege of the class he has belonged to and disgraced."

"Not a bit of it, Roland. He is an average member of the guild; the only difference being, with more than average ability. These fellows are all alike. Leave them, I say. Come and rough it with me in the 'Basque,' where a gallant band are fighting for the true Sovereign; or let us have another dash in the Far West, where the chase is as the peril and glory of war; or what say you to the East?

a Circassian saddle and a scimitar would not be strange to us. Choose your own land, my boy, and let us meet this day month at Cadiz."

"But why leave me, Enrique? I never had more need of a true-hearted friend than now."

"No, I cannot stay; my last chance of seeing Maritaña depends on my reaching Naples at once; and as to your affair with Linton, it will be one of those things of etiquette, and measured distance, and hair-trigger, in which a rough sailor like myself would be out of place."

"And Maritaña—tell me of her. They said that Rica had come to England."

"Rica! He dared not set foot on shore here. The fellow has few countries open to him now: nor is it known where he is."

"And is she alone? Is Maritaña unprotected?"

"Alone, but not unprotected. The girl who has twice crossed the Cordilleras with a rifle on her shoulder, need scarcely fear the insults of the coward herd that would molest her."

"But how is she living? In what rank—among what associates?"

"I only know that she maintains a costly retinue at the 'Albergo Reale;' that her equipages, her servants, her liveries, bespeak wealth without limit. She is a mystery to the city she inhabits. So much have I heard from others; from herself, a few lines reached me at Dieppe, begging me to see you, and—you will scarcely believe it—asking for a release from that bond of betrothal that passed between you—as if it could signify anything."

"Was the freedom thus obtained to be used in your favour, Enrique?"

The other grew purple, and it was a few seconds before he could answer. "No! that is over for ever. She has refused me as one so much below her, that the very thought of an alliance would be degradation. The sailor—the buccaneer—raise his eyes to her whom Princes seek in vain? I go now to say my last farewell: as long as there dwells upon my mind the slenderest chance of meeting her, so long will hope linger in my heart; not the high hope that spirits one to glorious enterprise, but that feverish anxiety that unnerves the courage and shakes the purpose. I cannot endure it any longer."

"Remain with me, then, for a day—for two at furthest—and we will go together to Naples."

"Do not ask me, Roland. Some accident—some one of those chances which befal each hour of life—might delay us; and then, I might never see her more. She is to leave Naples by the end of the month, but to go whither, or how, she will not tell. Promise me to follow. Let us meet there; and then, if the world has not a faster hold upon you than I deem it has, we'll seek our fortune together in new lands. What say you? is it a bargain?"

"Agreed," said Roland. "I'll leave this within a week, without

it be my fate to quit it never. Let us rendezvous at Naples, then; and fortune shall decide what after."

"How hundreds of things press upon my mind, all of which, when I am gone, will be remembered, but which now are confusedly mingled up together! What warnings I meant to have given you! what cautions! and now I can think of nothing."

"I have room for but one thought," said Cashel, sternly: "it is a debt which every hour unpaid increases by a tenfold interest."

"It need not weigh long upon your conscience. Linton wears the dress of a grandee of Spain to-night; but he'll conceal it from time to time beneath a plain brown domino with yellow cape. Do not mix with your company on arriving, but wait till about twelve o'clock in your room, and you'll hear him as he enters his own: then, without risk of disturbance, you can see him; or, if you like it better, send another to him. Should he be the man you suppose, the whole can be easily arranged by the light of morning."

"And so shall it be," said Cashel, in a deep low voice.

"If this life of luxury has not unsteadied your finger, I'd not take his place for half your fortune."

A short motion of the head from Cashel seemed to concur with this speech.

"How I wish you were to be with me, Enrique!" said he, after a silence of some minutes.

"So should I, Roland; but you will not need me: were there two to bring to reckoning, I'd stay, cost what it might. And here we say farewell." They had walked together, during this colloquy, to the high road, which on one side leads towards Tubbermore, and on the other to Limerick.

Cashel held his comrade's hand fast clasped in his own, without speaking. The sense of isolation had never struck him so forcibly as now that, having met an old and attached friend, he was about to part with him so suddenly. It appeared to darken his solitude into something more lonely still.

"I'd have thought that all this wealth had made you happier," said Enrique, as he gazed at the sorrow-struck features of his friend.

"Neither happier nor better," said Roland, mournfully.

"There! see yonder," cried Enrique, "where you see the lamps flashing; those are the carriages of your gay company. Remember that you are the host to-night; and so, good-by."

"Good-by, my old comrade."

"One word more," said Enrique. "Be not weak-hearted—trust none of them—they are false, every one: some from envy; some from treachery; some from that fickleness that they fancy to be knowledge of life; but all are alike. And so, till we meet again at Naples."

"At Naples," echoed Cashel; and with head bent down, pursued his way homeward.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Warmth may suit the gen'rous fool;
The deeper knave must aye be cool.
BELL.

RAPIDLY as carriage after carriage rolls up the broad approach to Tubbermore, the lamps flashing and glittering through the dark wood, we must beg of our reader to turn back a few hours in our history, and follow the steps of Mr. Linton, as, leaving the cottage, he turned towards the "Great House."

Probably, to a mind constituted like his, there could be no more poignant sense of sorrow and regret than that experienced in consequence of a sudden and irrepressible burst of passion. It was a great fault—the greatest he could commit. In justice to him, we will own it was of the very rarest in occurrence. His outbreaks of anger, like his moments of calm, were all studied beforehand; and nothing short of a catastrophe, unexpected and overwhelming, could have surprised him into the fatal excess of which his interview with Corrigan was an instance.

If repentance could have compensated for his sin, assuredly the offence might have been effaced from the tablet of his misdeeds. Never was sorrow more true, heartfelt, and cutting. He called none of his accustomed casuistry to aid him in softening down his fault; he saw it in all the breadth of its enormity, as a foul blot upon that system of deceit in which years of practice had made him so perfect. He felt compromised by himself; and possibly, to a cunning man, this is the bitterest of all self-reproaches.

Very little consideration was needed to show that, so far as Corrigan went, reconciliation was impossible. He knew the old man too well to have a doubt upon that subject. What, then, was to be done? In which was the most profitable channel to turn the stream of coming events? Were Cashel a man of different mould, there would be no price too high to pay for that document which stood between him and his title to the estate. It was all the difference between rank and obscurity—between wealth and want—between the condition of an estated gentleman and the assumption of a mere pretender. Wide as the alternatives lay, Linton knew they would not affect Cashel's mind. He foresaw clearly that, in a burst of his "most virtuous probity," he would declare Corrigan the rightful owner of the estate, and walk forth into the world as poor as when he began it. With Cashel, therefore, all treaty would be impossible. The next consi-

deration was, what terms might be made with Corrigan through Tiernay. The rough frankness of the old Doctor had always been reckoned by Linton as a common-place trick of certain coarse minds, to simulate honesty and straightforwardness. He believed that mankind consisted of but two categories—the knave and the fool: he who was not one, must necessarily be the other. Now, an acute study of Tiernay persuaded him that he was a shrewd, sound-headed man, whose very profession had trained him into habits of investigation; and thought there could be little doubt, therefore, into which class he fell. There was, moreover, this advantage in treating with him, that neither personal feeling nor pride of station would interfere with the negotiation; he would entertain the question in the simple light of a bargain—so much for so much. The unlucky release of all claim upon their property was, of course, to be thought of—as deteriorating, if not altogether invalidating, the title; but of this it might be possible, perhaps, to obtain possession. Cashel's papers must be ransacked throughout; it was very unlikely that he had taken an unusual care of it, so that Linton was far from supposing that this would present a serious difficulty. But why had he not thought of this before? Why had he suffered his disappointment to blind him to what was so palpable? "So much for thinking the game won ere it is finished," exclaimed he; "but who would have thought Linton should make this blunder?"

To treat with Tiernay, then, realised every advantage he could think of. It offered the prospect of better terms, an easier negotiation; and it presented one feature of inestimable merit in his eyes—it afforded the means of gratifying his hatred against Cashel, without the vengeance costing him anything. This thought, for a while, left him incapable of entertaining every other. Cashel reduced to poverty —humiliated to the position of an adventurer who had obtained a property under false pretences—was a picture he could never weary of contemplating. What a glorious consummation of revenge, could he have involved one other in the ruin!—if Laura had been the companion of his fall! But that scheme had failed: a friendship, a perilous one, 'tis true—had sprung up where Linton had sowed the seeds of a very different passion; and nothing remained but to involve them both in the disgrace and ruin which a separation and its consequences could inflict. "Even this," thought he, "will now be no trifling penalty—the 'millionnaire' Roland Cashel would have conferred an *éclat* on the fall, that would become ludicrous when associated with the name of a mere adventurer."

If thoughts of these vengeances afforded the most intense pleasure to his vindictive mind, there came, ever and anon, deep regrets at the loss of that greater game for which he had planned and plotted so anxiously. That noble fortune which he had almost held within his

grasp—that high station from which he would have known how to derive all its advantages—the political position he had so long ambitioned—were now all to flit from before his eyes like the forms of a dream, unreal and impossible.

So intently had he pursued these various reasonings, that he utterly forgot everything of his late interview with Tom Keane; and when the remembrance did flash upon him, the effect was almost stunning. The crime would now be useless, so far as regarded Linton's own advantage. Mary Leicester could never be his wife: why, then, involve himself, however remotely, in a deed as profitless as it was perilous? No time should be lost about this. He must see Keane immediately, and dissuade him from the attempt. It would be easy to assure him that the whole was a misconception—a mistake of meaning. It was not necessary to convince—it was enough to avert the act; but this must be done at once.

So reflecting, Linton took his way to the gate-lodge, which lay a considerable distance off. The space afforded much time for thought, and he was one whose thoughts travelled fast. His plans were all matured and easy of accomplishment. After seeing Keane, he would address a few lines to Tiernay, requesting an interview on the following morning. That night, he resolved, should be his last at Tubbermore; the masquerade had, as may be conjectured, few charms for one whose mind was charged with heaver cares, but still it would give him an occasion to whisper about his scandal on Lady Kilgoff, and, later on, give him the opportunity of searching Cashel's papers for that document he wished to obtain.

On reaching the gate-lodge, under pretence of lighting his cigar, he entered the house, where, in all the squalid misery of their untractable habits, Keane's wife sat, surrounded by her ragged children.

"Tom is at work, I suppose?" said he, carelessly.

"No, yer Honer; he went out early this morning to look after a little place for us, as the master is goin' to turn us out."

"I'm sorry for that," said he, compassionately; "land is dear, and hard to be got now-a-days. Why don't he go to America?"

"Indeed an' I don't know, Sir. They say it's the asy place to gain a livin'; fine pay, and little to do for it."

Linton smiled at an encomium for whose accuracy he would not have vouched; and then tried to ascertain, in the same careless fashion, in what direction Keane had gone; but the woman could not tell. She believed it was by the high road, but could not be certain, since he had left the house shortly after daybreak.

Linton sauntered out in deep thought. It was evident enough to him what the object of that journey was: it needed no clue to track his path. It was strange; but now, when the deed was not to secure any future benefits to himself, it appeared before his eyes in all the

glaring colours of its criminality. It was a cold-blooded and useless crime, and he actually shuddered as he thought upon it.

Although he well knew that it would not be possible to connect him in any way with the act, his conscience made him restless and uneasy, and he would have given much that he had never mooted it. It was too late, however, now, to think of these things; were he to mount his horse and follow the fellow Keane, the chances of coming up with him were few. The man would inevitably have concealed himself till the very moment came; and were Linton to be present at such a time, the fact of his presence might, in such a remote and unfrequented spot, give rise to the very worst suspicions. "Be it so," said he at length, and with the tone of one who left the issue to fortune. He found himself now upon the high road, and remembering that he was not far from Tiernay's house, resolved on making a visit to the Doctor in person. It might so happen hereafter that a question would arise where he had passed the morning. There was no saying what turn events might take, and it would be as well were he able to show that he had spent some time in Tiernay's company; and as, in such a critical moment, it would have been far from wise to discuss any matter connected with Cashel's property, it were safest to make the object of the visit appear an effort to obtain Doctor Tiernay's kind mediation in the difference with Mr. Corrigan.

To pass half an hour in his company, under any pretext, would be to put on record his occupation on that morning; and, with this resolve, he knocked at the door.

It was with a start of surprise Tiernay received Linton as he entered his study. The Doctor arose from the chair where he had been sitting, and stood in the attitude of one who desires by his very air and deportment to express that he does not mean that the other should be seated.

"This is an honour, Sir," said he, at last, "so undeserved on my part, that I am at a loss how to acknowledge it."

"A little patience and a little courtesy are all I ask for, Dr. Tiernay," replied Linton, while he placed a chair and seated himself with the most perfect unconcern. "You may easily guess that I do not intrude my presence upon you without what at least seem to me to be sufficient reasons. Whether you may think them so or not, will in a great measure depend upon whether you prefer to be guided by the false lights of an unjust prejudice, or the true illumination of your own natural good sense and practical intelligence."

Tiernay sat down without speaking; the appeal was made calmly and dispassionately to him, and he felt that he could not but entertain it, particularly as the scene was beneath his own roof.

Linton resumed:

"*Your* friend—I hope the time is not distant when I may be

enabled to say and *mine*—Mr. Corrigan, acting under the greatest of all misconceptions, mistaking my heartfelt zeal in his behalf for an undue interference in his affairs, has to-day expressed himself towards me in a manner so uncalled for, so unfair, and ungenerous, that, considering the position I sought to occupy in his regard, either bespeaks the existence of some secret attack upon my character, or that a mere sudden caprice of temper overbalances with him the qualities he has been gracious enough to speak of in terms of praise and approbation."

Tiernay gave a short, dry nod, whose significance was so very doubtful that Linton stopped and stared at him, as if asking for further information.

"I had made a proposition for the hand of his granddaughter," resumed he, "and surely my pretensions could not subject me to rebuke?"

Tiernay nodded again, in the same puzzling way as before.

"Knowing the influence you possess in the family," resumed Linton, "seeing how much confidence they repose in your counsels, I have thought it advisable to state to you that, although naturally indignant at the treatment I have met with, and possibly carried away for a moment by passion, my feelings regarding Miss Leicester are unchanged; and, I believe, unchangeable."

Tiernay moved his head slightly, as though implying assent.

"Am I to understand, Sir, that my communication is pleasing to you?" said Linton, firmly.

"Very pleasing in every respect," said Tiernay.

"And I may reckon upon your kind offices in my behalf, Dr. Tiernay?"

Tiernay shook his head negatively.

"Be kind enough to speak your mind more intelligibly, Sir, for there is need that we should understand each other here."

"I will be as explicit as you can desire, Sir. Your communication was gratifying to me in so far that it showed me how my old and esteemed friend Mr. Corrigan had thrown off the delusion in which he had indulged regarding you, and saw you as I have always thought you—a clever worldly man, without scruples as to his means when an object had once gained possession of his wishes, and who never could have dreamed of making Miss Leicester his wife were there not other and deeper purposes to be attained by so doing."

"You are candour itself, Sir," said Linton; "but I cannot feel offence at a frankness I have myself asked for. Pray extend the favour, and say what could possibly be these other and deeper purposes you allude to? What advantages could I propose myself by such an alliance, save increased facilities of conversation with Dr. Tiernay, and more frequent opportunities of indulging in 'tric-trac' with Mr. Corrigan?"

Tiernay winced under the sarcasm, but only said,

"To divine your motives would be to become your equal in skill and cleverness. I have no pretensions to such excellence."

"So that you are satisfied with attributing to another objects for which you see no reason and motive, and of which you perceive no drift?"

"I am satisfied to believe in much that I cannot fathom."

"We will pursue this no further," said Linton, impatiently. "Let us reverse the medal. Mr. Corrigan's refusal of me, coupled with his uncourteous conduct, may lead to unpleasant results. Is he prepared for such?"

"I have never known him to shrink from the consequences of his own conduct," replied Tiernay, steadfastly.

"Even though that conduct should leave him houseless?" whispered Linton.

"It cannot, Sir, while *I* have a roof."

"Generously spoken, Sir," said Linton, while he threw his eyes over the humble decorations of his chamber with an expression of contempt there was no mistaking.

"Humble and poor enough it is, Sir," said Tiernay, answering the glance, "but the fruit of honest industry. Neither a father's curse, nor a mother's tear, hovers over one of the little comforts around me."

"An ancient Roman in virtue!" exclaimed Linton, affectedly. "How sad, that our degenerate days so ill reward such excellence!"

"You are wrong there, Sir. Even for merits poor and unobtrusive as mine, there are tributes of affection more costly than great men know of. There are those on every hand around me who would resign health, and hope, and life itself, to do me service. There are some who, in their rude zeal, would think little of making even Mr. Linton regret his having needlessly insulted me. Ay, Sir, I have but to open that window and speak one word, and you would sorely repent this day's proceeding."

Linton sat calm and collected under this burst of anger, as though he were actually enjoying the outbreak he had provoked. "You have a lawless population here, it would seem then," said he, smiling blandly, as he rose from his seat. "I think the Government is badly rewarded by bestowing its resources on such a neighbourhood. A police-barracks would suit you better than an hospital, and so I shall tell Mr. Downie Meek."

Tiernay grew suddenly pale. The threat was too palpable to be mistaken, nor was he sufficiently conversant with the world of policy to detect its fallacy.

"Two hundred pounds a year," resumed Linton, "can be of no moment to one who is surrounded by such generous devotion, while

some respect for law or order will be a good 'alternative,'—isn't that the phrase, Doctor ?"

Tiernay could not utter a word. Like many men who pass their lives in seclusion, he had formed the most exaggerated ideas of the despotism of those in power; he believed that for the gratification of a mere whim or passing caprice they would not scruple at an act of oppression that might lead to ruin itself; he felt shocked at the peril to which a hasty word had exposed him. Linton read him like a book, and gazing fixedly at him, said, "Your craft has taught you little of worldly skill, Dr. Tiernay, or you would have seen that it is better to incur a passing inconvenience, than run the risk of a severe and perhaps fatal misfortune. Methinks that a science of expediencies might have instilled a few of its wise precepts into every-day life."

The Doctor stared, half in astonishment, half in anger, but never spoke.

"Reflect a little upon this point," said Linton, slowly; "remember, too, that a man like myself, who never acts without an object, may be a very good associate for him who has neither courage nor energy for action at all; and lastly, bethink you that the subtlety and skill which can make a useful friend, can become very readily the materials of a dangerous enemy."

Linton knew well the force and significance of vagueness, either in threat or promise; and no sooner had he done speaking than he left the room and the house; while Tiernay, bewildered and terrified, sat down to think over what had passed.

"He'll come to terms, I see that!" cried Linton to himself, as he entered the park of Tubbermore. "A little time—a sleepless night or two—the uncertainty of that future, which to every man past fifty gets another tinge of black with each year—will do the business, and I'll have him suing for the conditions he would now reject."

Never yet, however, had time been a greater object with Linton. The host of creditors whom he had staved off for some months back —some, by paying large sums on account; others, by the assurance that he was on the eve of a rich marriage—would, at the very first semblance of his defeat, return and overwhelm him. Many of his debts were incurred to hush up play transactions, which, if once made public, his station in society would be no longer tenable. Of his former associates, more than one lived upon him by the mere menace of the past. Some were impatient, too, at the protracted game he played with Roland, and reproached him with not "finishing him off" long before, by cards and the dice-box. Others, were indignant that they were not admitted to the share of the spoil, with all the contingent advantages of mixing in a class where they might have found the most profitable acquaintances. To hold all these in check had been

a difficult matter, and few save himself could have accomplished it. To restrain them much longer was impossible. With these thoughts he walked along, scarce noticing the long string of carriages which now filled the avenue, and hastened towards the house. Occasionally a thought would cross his mind, "What if the bullet had already done its work? What if that vast estate were now once more thrown upon the wide ocean of litigation? Would Corrigan prefer his claim again, or would some new suitor spring up? and if so, what sum could recompense the possession of that pardon by which the whole property might be restored to its ancient owners? Amid all these canvassings, no feeling arose for the fate of him who had treated him as a bosom friend—not one regret, not so much as one sensation of pity. True, indeed, he did reflect upon what course to adopt when the tidings arrived. Long did he vacillate whether Tom Keane should not be arrested on suspicion. There were difficulties in either course, and, as usual, he preferred that coming events should suggest their own conduct.

At last he reached the great house, but instead of entering by the front door, he passed into the court-yard, and gained his own apartment unobserved. As he entered he locked the door, and placed the key in such a manner that none could peep through the keyhole. He then walked leisurely around the room; and although he knew there was no other outlet, he cast a glance of scrutinising import on every side, as if to assure himself that he was alone. This done, he opened a small cupboard in the wall behind his bed, and took forth the iron box, in which, since its discovery, he had always kept the pardon, as well as the forged conveyance of Tubber-beg.

Linton placed the box before him on the table, and gazed at it in a kind of rapture. "There," thought he, "lies the weapon by which at once I achieve both fortune and revenge. Let events take what turn they will, *there*, is a certain source of wealth. A great estate like this will have its claimants: with me it rests who shall be the successful one."

A hurried knocking at the door interrupted the current of these musings; and Linton, having replaced the casket in the press, unlocked the door. It was Mr. Phillis, who, in all the gala of full dress, and with a rare camellia in his button-hole, entered.

"Well, Phillis, is all going on as it ought?" said Linton, carelessly.

"Scarcely so, Sir," said the soft-voiced functionary; "the house is filling fast, but there is no one to receive the company; and they are walking about staring at each other, and asking who is to do the honours."

"Awkward, certainly," said Linton, coolly; "Lady Kilgoff ought to have been the person."

"She is gone, Sir," said Phillis.

"Gone! gone! When, and where?"

"I cannot say, Sir; but my Lord and her Ladyship left this morning, early, with post-horses, taking the Dublin road."

Linton did not speak, but the swollen vein in his forehead, and the red flush upon his brow, told how the tidings affected him. He had long speculated on witnessing the agonies of her grief when the hour of his revenge drew nigh; and this ecstasy of cruelty was now to be denied him.

"And my Lord—had he regained any consciousness? or was he still insensible?"

"He appeared like a child, Sir, when they lifted him into the carriage."

"And Lady Kilgoff?"

"She held her veil doubled over her face as she passed; but I thought she sighed, and even sobbed, as she handed me this letter."

"'For Roland Cashel, Esquire,'" said Linton, reading as he took it. "Did she speak at all, Phillis?"

"Not a word, Sir. It was a sad-looking procession altogether, moving away in the dim grey of the morning."

Linton placed the letter in a rack upon the chimney, and for some seconds was lost in thought.

"If Lady Janet, Sir, would be kind enough to receive the company," murmured Phillis, softly.

"Pooh, man, it is of no consequence!" said Linton, roughly, his mind dwelling on a very different theme. "Let who will play host or hostess."

"Perhaps you would come down yourself soon, Sir?" asked Phillis, who read in the impatience of Linton's manner the desire to be alone, and coupled that desire with some mysterious purpose.

"Yes, leave me, Phillis; I'm going to dress," said he, hurriedly. "Has *he* returned yet?"

"No, Sir; and we expected him at five o'clock."

"And it is now nine," said the other, solemnly; "four hours later."

"It is very singular!" exclaimed Phillis, who was more struck by the altered expression of Linton's face than by the common-place fact he affected to marvel at.

"Why singular? What is remarkable? That a man should be delayed some time on a business matter, particularly when there was no urgency to repair elsewhere?"

"Nothing more common, Sir; only that Mr. Cashel said positively he should be here at five. He had ordered the cob pony to be ready for him—a sign that he was going to pay a visit at the cottage."

Linton made no reply, but his lips curled into a smile of dark and ominous meaning.

"Leave me, Phillis," said he, at length; "I shall be late, with all this cumbrous finery I am to wear."

"Shall I send your man, Sir?" said Phillis, slyly eyeing him as he spoke.

"Yes—no, Phillis—not yet. I'll ring for him later."

And with these words Linton seated himself in a large chair, apparently unconscious of the other's presence.

Mr. Phillis withdrew noiselessly—but not far—for after advancing a few steps along the corridor, he cautiously returned, and listened at the door.

Linton sat for a few seconds, as if listening to the other's retreating footsteps; and then, noiselessly arising from his chair, he approached the door of the chamber, at which, with bent-down head, Phillis watched. With a sudden jerk of the handle Linton threw open the door, and stood before the terrified menial.

"I was afraid you were ill, Sir. I thought your manner was strange."

"Not half so strange as this conduct, Mr. Phillis," said Linton, slowly, as he folded his arms composedly on his breast. "Come in." He pointed, as he spoke, to the room; but Phillis seemed reluctant to enter, and made a gesture of excuse. "Come in, Sir," said Linton, peremptorily; and he obeyed. Linton immediately locked the door, and placed the key upon the chimney-piece; then deliberately seating himself full in front of the other, he stared at him long and fixedly. "So, Sir," said he, at length, "you have thought fit to become a spy upon my actions. Now, there is but one *amende* you can make for such treachery; which is, to confess frankly and openly what it is you want to know, and what small mystery is puzzling your puny intelligence, and making your nights sleepless. Tell me this candidly, and I'll answer as freely."

"I have really nothing to confess, Sir. I was fearful lest you were unwell. I thought—it was mere fancy, perhaps—that you were flurried and peculiar this morning; and this impression distressed me so, that—that——"

"That you deemed fit to watch me. Be it so. I have few secrets from any one—I have none from my friends. You shall hear, therefore, what—without my knowing it—has made me appear unusually agitated. It was my intention to leave this house to-morrow, Phillis, and in the preparation for my departure I was arranging my letters and papers, among which I found a very considerable quantity that prudence would consign to the flames—that is to say, if prudence were to be one-sided, and had only regard for the interests of one individual where there were two concerned. In plain language, Phillis, I was just about to burn the mass of documents which fill that iron safe, and which it were to the honour and credit of Mr.

Phillis should be reduced to charcoal as speedily as may be, the same being nothing more nor less than the accounts of that 'honest steward,' pinned to the real and *bonâ fide* bills of Mr. Cashel's tradespeople. There are, it is true, strange little discrepancies between the two, doubtless capable of satisfactory explanation, but which, to plain-thinking men like myself, are difficult to reconcile; and in some one or two instances—a wine merchant's account, for example, and a saddler's bill—savour somewhat of that indiscreet procedure people call forgery. What a mistake—what an inadvertence, Phillis!"

There was something of almost coaxing familiarity in the way Linton uttered the last words; and Phillis grew sick at heart as he listened to them.

"A moment more, an instant later, and I had thrown them into the fire; but your footsteps, as you walked away, sounded too purpose-like; you were so palpably honest, that I began to suspect you. Eh, Phillis, was I right?"

Phillis essayed a smile, but his features only accomplished a ghastly grin.

"I will keep them, therefore, where they are," said Linton. "These impulses of rash generosity are very costly pleasures; and there is no such good practical economy as to husband one's confidence."

"I'm sure, Sir, I never thought I should have seen the day——"

"Go on, man; don't falter. What day do you mean? that on which you had attempted to outwit *me?* or, that on which I should show you all the peril of your attempting it? Ay, and there is peril, Mr. Phillis: a felony whose punishment is transportation for life, is no small offence."

"Oh, Sir!—oh, Mr. Linton! forgive me," cried the other, in the most abject voice. "I always believed that my devotion to your interests would claim your protection."

"I never promised to further anything that was base or dishonest," said Linton, with an air of assumed morality.

"You opened and read letters that were addressed to another; you spied his actions, and kept watch upon all his doings; you wrote letters in his name, and became possessed of every secret of his life by treachery; you——"

"Don't talk so loud, Phillis; say all you have to say to *me*."

"Oh dear, Sir, forgive me the burst of passion. I never meant it. My temper carried me away in spite of me." And he burst into tears as he spoke.

"What a dangerous temper, that may at any moment make a felon of its owner! Go, Phillis, there is no need of more between us. You know *me*. I almost persuaded myself that I knew you. But if I know anything, it is this"—here he approached, and laid his hand

solemnly on the other's shoulder—"that I would make hell itself the punishment of him who injured me, were I even to share it with him."

Phillis's knees smote each other with terror at the look that accompanied these words; they were spoken without passion or vehemence, but there was that in their tone that thrilled to his inmost heart. Powerless, and overcome by his emotions, he could not stir from the spot: he wanted to make explanations and excuses, but all his ingenuity deserted him; he tried to utter vows of attachment and fidelity, but shame was too strong for him there also. He would have resorted to menace itself rather than remain silent, but he had no courage for such a hazardous course. Linton appeared to read in turn each change of mood that passed across the other's mind; and, after waiting as it were to enjoy the confusion under which he suffered, said:

"Just so, Phillis; it is a sad scrape you fell into; but when a man becomes bankrupt either in fame or fortune, it is but loss of time to bewail the past; the wiser course is to start in business again, and make a character by a good dividend. Try that plan. Good-by!"

These words were a command; and so Phillis understood them, as, with an humble bow, he left the room. Linton again locked the door, and drawing the table to a part of the room from which no eavesdropper at the door could detect it, he once more sat down at it. His late scene with Phillis had left no traces upon his memory; such events were too insignificant to claim any notice beyond the few minutes they occupied; his thoughts were now upon the greater game, where all his fortune in life was staked. He took out the key, which he always wore round his neck, and placed it in the lock: at the same instant the clock on the chimney-piece struck ten. He sat still, listening to the strokes; and when they ceased, he muttered, "Ay, mayhap cold enough ere this!" A slight shuddering shook him as he uttered these words, and a dreamy reverie seemed to gather around him; but he arose, and walking to the window, opened it. The fresh breeze of the night rallied him almost at once, and he closed the sash and returned to his place.

"To think that I should hold within my hands the destinies of those whom most of all the world I hate!" muttered he, as he turned the key and threw back the lid. The box was empty! With a wild cry, like the accent of intense bodily pain, he sprang up and dashed both hands into the vacant space, and then held them up before his eyes, like one who could not credit the evidence of his own senses. The moment was a terrible one, and for a few seconds the staring eyeballs and quivering lips seemed to threaten the access of a fit; but reason at last assumed the mastery, and he sat down before the table and leaned his head upon it to think. Twice before in life had

it been his lot to lose a whole fortune at one turn of the die, but never before had he staked all the revengeful feelings of his bad heart, which, baffled in their flow, now came back upon himself.

He sat thus for nigh an hour; and when he arose at last, his features were worn as though by a long illness; and as he moved his fingers through his hair, it came away in masses, like that of a man after fever.

CHAPTER XXV.

So, then, we meet at last.—HAROLD.

As the rooms began to fill with company, costumed in every variety that taste, fancy, or absurdity could devise, many were surprised that neither was there a host to bid them welcome, nor was there any lady to perform the accustomed honours of reception. The nature of the entertainment, to a certain extent, took off from the awkwardness of this want. In a masquerade, people either go to assume a part, or to be amused by the representation of others, and are less dependent on the attentions of the master or mistress of the house; so that, however struck at first by the singularity of a *fête* without the presence of the giver, pleasure, ministered to by its thousand appliances, overcame this feeling, and few ever thought more of him beneath whose roof they were assembled.

The rooms were splendid in their decoration, lighted "*a giorno*," and ornamented with flowers of the very rarest kind. The music consisted of a celebrated orchestra and a regimental band, who played alternately; the guests, several hundred in number, were all attired in fancy costumes, in which every age and nation found its type; while characters from well-known fictions abounded, many of them admirably sustained, and dressed with a pomp and splendour that told the wealth of the wearers.

It was truly a brilliant scene; brilliant as beauty, and the glitter of gems, and waving of plumes, and splendour of dress could make it. The magic impulse of pleasure communicated by the crash of music —the brilliant glare of wax-lights—the throng—the voices—the very atmosphere, tremulous with sounds of joy, seemed to urge on all there to give themselves up to enjoyment. There was a boundless, lavish air, too, in all the arrangements. Servants in gorgeous liveries served refreshments of the most exquisite kind. Little children, dressed as pages, distributed bouquets, bound round with lace of Valenciennes or Brussels, and occasionally fastened by strings of garnets or pearls. A *jet d'eau* of rose-water cooled the air of the

conservatory, and diffused its delicious freshness through the atmosphere. There was something princely in the scale of the hospitality; and from every tongue words of praise and wonder dropped at each moment.

Even Lady Janet, whose enthusiasm seldom rose much above the zero, confessed that it was a magnificent *fête;* adding, by way of compensation for her eulogy, "and worthy of better company."

Mrs. White was in ecstasies with everything, even to the cherubs in pink gauze wings who handed round sherbet, and whom she pronounced quite "classical." The Kennyfecks were in the seventh heaven of delight; affecting little airs of authority to the servants, and showing the strangers, by a hundred little devices, that all the magnificence around was no new thing to *them*. Miss Kennyfeck, as the Queen of Madagascar, was a most beautiful savage; while Olivia appeared as the fair "Gabrielle"—a sly intimation to Sir Harvey, whose dress as Henri IV. won universal admiration. Then there were the ordinary number of Turks, Jews, Sailors, Circassians, Greeks, Highland Chiefs, and Indian Jugglers; "Jim" figuring as a Newmarket "Jock," to the unbounded delight and wonderment of every "Sub" in the room.

If in many quarters the question ran, "Where is Mr. Cashel?" or, "Which is he?" Lady Janet had despatched Sir Andrew, attired as a "Moonshee," to find out Linton for her. "He is certain to know every one here: tell him to come to me at once," said she, sitting down near a doorway to watch the company.

While Lady Janet is waiting for him—who, better than any other, could explain the mysterious meaning of many a veiled figure, unravel the hidden wickedness of every chance allusion, or expound the secret malice of each calembourg or jest—let us track his wanderings, and follow him as he goes.

Throwing a large cloak over his brilliant dress, Linton made his way by many a by-stair and obscure passage to the back of the theatre, by which the secret approach led to Cashel's dressing-room. Often as he had trod that way before, never had he done so in the same state of intense excitement. With the loss of the papers, he saw before him not alone the defeat of every hope he nurtured, but discovery, shame, and ruin! He whose whole game in life was to wield power over others, now saw himself in the grasp of some one, to whom he had not the slightest clue. At one moment his suspicions pointed to Cashel himself, then to Tiernay, and lastly to Phillis. Possibly rage has no bitterer moment than that in which an habitual deceiver of others first finds himself in the toils of treachery. There was over his mind, besides, that superstitious terror, that to unbelieving intellects stands in place of religion, which told him that luck had turned with him; that fortune, so long favourable, had

changed at last; and that, in his own phrase, "the run had set in against him." Now, a half-muttered curse would burst from his lips over the foolhardiness that had made him so dilatory, and not suffered him to reap the harvest when it was ripe; now, a deep-breathed vow, that if fate were propitious once again, no matter how short the interval, he would strike his blow, come what might of it. Sometimes he blamed himself for having deserted the safe and easy road to ruin by play, for the ambitious course he had followed; at other times he inveighed against his folly for not carrying off Mary Leicester before Cashel had acquired any intimacy at the cottage. Burning and half-maddened with this conflict of regrets and hopes, he touched the spring, moved back the panel, and entered Cashel's room.

His first care was to see that the door from the corridor was secured on the inside; his next, to close the shutters and draw the curtains. These done, he lighted the candles on the table, and proceeded to make a systematic search through the entire chamber. "It is my last visit here," said he to himself; "I must take care to do my work cleanly." A mass of papers had been that morning left behind him by Cashel, most of them legal documents referring to his transactions with Hoare; but some were memoranda of his intentions respecting Corrigan, and plainly showing that Cashel well remembered he had never completed his assignment to Linton. "If Keane's hand has not faltered," muttered he, "Master Roland's memory will not be taxed in this world at least; but where to discover the deed? that is the question." In his anxiety on this head, he ransacked drawers and cabinets with wild and furious haste, strewing their contents around him, or wantonly throwing them on the fire. With false keys for every lock, he opened the most secret depositories—scarce glancing at letters which at any other time he had devoured with interest. Many were from Lady Kilgoff, warning Cashel against him; his own name, seen passingly, would arrest his attention for a second, but the weightier interest soon intervened, and he would throw the papers from him with contempt. "How shrewd! how very cunning!" muttered he, once or twice, as his glance caught some suspicion, some assumed clue to his own motives, in her well-known handwriting. Baffled by the unsuccessful result of his search, he stood in the midst of the floor, surrounded by open boxes, the contents of which were strewn on every side; rage and disappointment were depicted in his features; and, as his clenched hand struck the table, his whole expression became demoniac. Curses and deep blasphemies fell from his half-moving lips, as he stood insensible to everything save the wreck of his long-cherished hope.

Let us turn from him to another, in whose fortunes we are more interested. Roland Cashel, after parting with Enrique, hastened on towards Tubbermore; his thoughts engaged on every topic save that

which might be supposed to occupy the mind of a host at such a time. Pleasure assuredly held a weaker hold upon him than the thirst for vengeance, and the ardent longing to throw off the thraldom of that servitude he had endured too long.

It was only by observing the long string of carriages, whose lamps flashed and disappeared at intervals among the trees, that he remembered anything of the *fête*, and bethought him of that character of entertainer he, at the moment, should have been performing. There seemed to him a terrible inconsistency between his own thoughts and that scene of pleasure!—between the object in pursuit of which so many were hastening with furious speed, and that to which his slower steps were leading him!

"There can be but one *amende* for such infamous conduct," muttered he; "he shall pay it with his life's blood." And as he spoke, he opened the documents which Enrique had given him, and endeavoured to read them: the dusky shadows of the fast-falling night prevented him, and he stood for some minutes lost in thought.

One of the papers, he was aware, bore the forged signature of his name; the other, whose antique form and massive seal bespoke an importance far greater, he tried again and again to decipher, but in vain. As he was thus occupied, he chanced to look up, and suddenly perceived that a stream of light issued from beneath the shutters of his own dressing-room, the door of which he had himself locked at his departure, taking the key along with him. Enrique's words flashed across his memory at once. It was Linton was there! "At his old work again," muttered he, in deep anger; "but it shall be for the last time." A moment of coming peril was all that Cashel needed to elicit the resources of his character. The courage tried in many a danger supplied him with a calm foresight, which the ordinary occasions of life rarely or never called forth. He bethought him that it were best at such a conjuncture to deposit the sealed document in some place of safety ere he went forth upon an enterprise the result of which must be doubtful: for all purposes of confronting Linton it were sufficient to take the forged deed along with him. These were conclusions formed as rapidly as they occurred, and acted upon no less speedily; for, folding up the parchment, he inserted it into a cleft in an aged elm-tree, noting well the spot, and marking all the signs by which he would be able to return to it. His next thought was, how to reach his chamber: to enter the house at such a time undiscovered, was of course out of the question; he would be seen and recognised at once, and then there would be an end for ever of all the secrecy by which he hoped to cover the proceedings with Linton.

It neither suited his inclinations nor his plans that the world should be a party to his vengeance. "Let them discover it when it is over," said he, "but let them not be able to interfere with its

course." All approach to his dressing-room through the house being thus impracticable, nothing remained but to reach it from without. The chamber was in a second story of the building, at a great height from the ground; but the walls were here covered with thick ivy of ancient growth, and by this Cashel resolved to make the attempt.

The act was not devoid of danger; but there are times when peril is a relief to the mad conflict of thought, and this was such a moment to Cashel. In an instant he made himself ready for the attempt, and with an activity that many a danger had tested, began the ascent. There are occasions when rashness is safety, and now, the headlong intrepidity of Roland's attempt proved its security, for at each step, as the ivy gave way beneath his grasp or his footing, by an upward spring he reached another spot, which in its turn broke with his weight: every instant the danger increased, for the frail tendrils grew weaker as he ascended, and beneath him the jagged and drooping branches hung down in ruinous disorder. By one bold spring he reached the window-sill, and after a momentary struggle, in which his athletic frame saved him from certain death, he gained a footing upon the stone, and was able to see what was passing within the room.

At a table covered with papers and open letters Linton sat, searching with eager haste for the missing documents; open boxes and presses on every side, rifled of their contents, were seen, some of which lay in disordered masses upon the floor—some in charred heaps within the fender. As the light fell upon his features, Cashel remarked that they were lividly pale—the very lips were colourless; his hands too, trembled violently as they moved among the papers, and his mouth continued to be moved by short convulsive twitches. To Roland these signs of suffering conveyed a perfect ecstasy of pleasure. That careworn, haggard face—that tremulous cheek and lustreless eye, were already an instalment of his vengeance.

There was one box which contained many of Cashel's early letters, when he was following the wild buccaneering life of the West; and this, secured by a lock of peculiar construction, Linton had never succeeded in opening. It stood before him, as with a last effort he tried every art upon it. The hinges alone seemed to offer a prospect of success, and he was now endeavouring to remove the fastenings of these. With more of force than skill, for defeat had rendered him impatient, Linton had already loosened the lid, when Cashel burst open the sash with one vigorous blow, and leaped into the room.

The terrible crash of the shattered window made Linton spring round; and there he stood, confronted with the other—each, motionless and silent. In Cashel's steady, manly form there was a very world of indignant contempt; and Linton met the gaze with a look of deadly hatred. All the dissimulation by which he could cover over a

treachery was at an end; his deceit was no longer of use, and he stood forth in the full courage of his scoundrelism—bold, steady, and assured.

"This admits of no excuse—no palliation," said Cashel, as he pointed to the open letters and papers which covered the floor; and although the words were uttered calmly, they were more disconcerting than if given with passionate vehemence.

"I never thought of any," replied Linton, collectedly.

"So much the better, Sir. It seems to me, frankness is the only reparation you can make for past infamy!"

"It may be the only one you will be disposed to ask for," said Linton, sneeringly.

Cashel grew fiery red. To taunt him with want of courage was something so unexpected—for which he was so totally unprepared—that he lost his self-possession, and in a passionate tone exclaimed:

"Is it *you* who dare to say this to *me?*—you, whose infamy has need but to be published abroad, to make every one who calls himself 'Gentleman' shun your very contact!"

"This punctilious reverence for honour does infinite credit to your buccaneer education," said Linton, whose eyes sparkled with malignant delight at the angry passion he had succeeded in evoking. "The friendship of escaped felons must have a wondrous influence upon refinement."

"Enough, Sir!" said Cashel. "How came you into the room, since the key of it is in my pocket?"

"Were I to inform you," said Linton, "you would acknowledge it was by a much more legitimate mode than that by which you effected your entrance."

"You shall decide which is the pleasanter, then!" cried Cashel, as he tore open the window, and advanced in a menacing manner towards the other.

"Take care, Cashel," said Linton, in a low, deliberate voice; "I am armed!"

And while he spoke, he placed one hand within the breast of his coat, and held it there. Quick as was the motion, it was not sudden enough to escape the flashing eye of Roland, who sprang upon him, and seized his wrist with a grasp that nearly jammed the bones together.

"Provoke me a little further," cried he, "and, by Heaven! I'll not give you the choice or chance of safety, but hurl you from that window as I would the meanest housebreaker."

"Let me free—let me loose, Sir," said Linton, in a low, weak voice, which passion, not fear, had reduced to a mere whisper. "You shall have the satisfaction you aim at, when, and how, you please."

"By daylight to-morrow, at the boat-quay beside the lake."

"Agreed. There is no need of witnesses—we understand each other."

"Be it so. Be true to your word, and none shall hear from *me* the reasons of our meeting, nor what has occurred here this night."

"I care not if all the world knew it," said Linton, insolently; "I came in quest of a lost document—one, which I had my reasons to suspect had fallen into your possession.

"And of whose forgery I have the proofs," said Cashel, as opening the deed, he held it up before Linton's eyes. "Do you see that?"

"And do you know, Cashel," cried Linton, assuming a voice of slow and most deliberate utterance, "that your own title to this property is as valueless and as worthless as that document you hold there? Do you know that there is in existence a paper which, produced in an open court of justice, would reduce you to beggary, and stamp you, besides, as an impostor? It may be that you are well aware of that fact; and that the same means by which you have possessed yourself of what was mine, has delivered into your hands this valuable paper. But the subtlety is thrown away; *I* am cognisant of its existence; *I* have even shown it to another; and on *me* it depends whether you live here as a master, or walk forth in all the exposure of a cheat."

The nature of this announcement, its possible truth, added to the consummate effrontery of him who made it, contributed to render Cashel silent, for he was actually stunned by what he heard. Linton saw the effect, but mistook its import. He believed that some thought of a compromise was passing through a mind where vengeance alone predominated; and in this error he drew nearer to him, and in a voice of cool and calm persuasion added:

"That *you* could pilot the course through all these difficulties, no one knows better than yourself to be impossible. There is but one living able to do so, and *I* am that one."

Cashel started back, and Linton went on:

"There is no question of friendship between us here. It is a matter of pure interest and mutual convenience that binds us. Agree to my terms, and you are still the owner of the estate; reject them, and you are as poor as poverty and exposure can make you."

"Scoundrel!" said Cashel. It was all that he could utter: the fulness of his passion had nearly choked him, as, taking a heavy riding-glove from the table, he struck Linton with it across the face. "If there be any manhood in such a wretch, let this provoke it!"

Linton's hand grasped the weapon he carried within his coat, but with a quick, short stroke Cashel struck down his arm, and it fell powerless to his side.

"You shall pay dearly for this—dearly, by Heaven!" cried Linton, as he retired towards the door.

"Go, Sir," said Cashel, flinging it wide open, "and go quickly, or I may do that I should be sorry for."

"You have done that you will be sorry for, if it costs me my life's blood to buy it." And with these words, delivered in a voice guttural from rage, Linton disappeared, and Cashel stood alone in the centre of the room, overwhelmed by the terrible conflict of his passions.

The room littered with papers—the open boxes scattered on every side—his own hands cut and bleeding from the broken glass of the window—his dress torn from the recent exertion—were evidences of the past; and it seemed as though, without such proofs, he could not credit his memory, as to events so strange and stunning.

To restore something like order to his chamber, as a means of avoiding the rumours that would be circulated by servants; to write some letters—the last, perhaps, he should ever indite; to dress and appear among his company; to send for some one with whom he might confer as to his affairs—such were the impulses that alternately swayed him, and to which he yielded by turns; now, seating himself at his table; now, hastening hither and thither, tossing over the motley livery of distasteful pleasure, or handling, with the rapture of revenge, the weapons by which he hoped to wreak his vengeance. The only fear that dwelt upon his mind was, lest Linton should escape him—lest, by any accident, this, which now appeared the great business of his life, should go unacquitted. Sometimes he reproached himself for having postponed the hour of vengeance, not knowing what chances might intervene, what accidents interrupt the course of his sworn revenge. Fortune, wealth, station, love itself had no hold upon him; it was that mad frame of mind where one sole thought predominates, and, in its mastery, makes all else subordinate. Would Linton be true to the rendezvous?—Could such a man be a coward?—Would he compass the vengeance he had threatened by other means? were questions that constantly occurred to his mind.

If the sounds of music and the clangour of festivity did break in upon this mood from time to time, it was but to convey some indistinct and shadowy impression of the inconsistency between his sad brooding and the scene by which he was surrounded—between the terrible conflict within him, and the wild gaiety of those who wasted no thought upon him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Amid their feasting and their joy
A cry of "Blood!" was heard.

It was past midnight, and the scene within the walls of Tubbermore was one of the most brilliant festivity. All that could fascinate by beauty—all that could dazzle by splendour, or amuse by fancy, or enliven by wit, were there, stimulated by that atmosphere of pleasure in which they moved. Loveliness elevated by costume—grace rendered more attractive by the licensed freedom of the hour—gaiety exalted into exuberant joyousness by the impulse of a thousand high-beating hearts—passed and repassed, and mingled together, till they formed that brilliant assemblage wherein individuality is lost, and the memory carries away nothing but dreamy images of enjoyment, visions of liquid eyes and silky tresses, of fair rounded arms and fairy feet, with stray syllables that linger on the ear and vibrate in the heart for many a long year to come.

It would have been difficult to imagine that one, even one, amid that gorgeous throng, had any other thought than pleasure, so headlong seemed the impulse of enjoyment. In vain the moralist might have searched for any trace of that care which is believed to be the unceasing burden of humanity. Even upon those who sustained no portion of the brilliancy around them, pleasure had set its seal. Lady Janet herself wondered, and admired, and stared, in an ecstasy of delight she could neither credit nor comprehend. It was true, Linton's absence—"unaccountable," as she called it—was a sad drawback upon her enjoyment. Yet her own shrewdness enabled her to penetrate many a mystery, and detect beneath the dusky folds of more than one domino those who a few moments previous had displayed themselves in all the splendour of a gorgeous costume.

In vain did Lord Charles Frobisher cover his Tartar dress with a Laplander's cloak and hood, to follow Miss Meek unnoticed. In vain did Upton abandon his royalty as Henri IV. for a Dominican's cowl, the better to approach a certain fair nun with dark blue eyes: Lady Janet whispered, "Take care, Olivia," as she passed her. Even Mrs. Leicester White, admirably disguised as a Gipsy Fortune-teller, did not dare to speculate upon Lady Janet's "future"—possibly, out of fear of her "present." Mr. Howle alone escaped detection, as, dressed to represent the Obelisk of the "Luqsor," he stood immovable in the middle of the room, listening to everybody, and never supposed to be anything but an inanimate ornament of the saloon.

It was only when a minuet was about to be formed, and a question arose as to whether the obelisk could not be removed, that the Egyptian monument was seen slowly sidling off amidst the company, to the great amusement of all who had not opened their confidences beneath its shadow. For an instant the laughter that circulated in many a distant group was directed to this quarter, and bursts of merriment were excited by the absurdity of the incident. With that mysterious instinct by which moods of joy or grief are perpetuated from heart to heart, till each in a crowded assembly is moved as is his neighbour, the whole room shook with convulsive laughter. It was just then—at the very moment when boundless pleasure filled every avenue of feeling—a terrible cry, shrill and piercing, burst upon the air. All was still—still as a lone church at midnight. Each gazed upon the other, as if silently asking, had he heard the sound? Again it came, louder and nearer; and then a long, loud, swelling chant rang out, wild and frantic as it rose, till it died away in a cadence of the very saddest and dreariest meaning.

"What is it?—What can it be?" were uttered by many in broken voices; while others, too much terrified to speak, sank half fainting upon their seats, their colourless cheeks and livid lips in terrible contrast to their gay attire.

"There!—listen to it again!—Good Heaven! what can it be?"

"It's a death 'keen!'" said a country gentleman, a magistrate named Goring; "something must have happened among the people!"

And now, none knew from what quarter arising, or by whom spoken, but the dreadful word "MURDER" was heard through the room. Many issued forth to ask for tidings; some, stayed to assure and rally the drooping courage of others; some, again, divested of the "motley," moved hurriedly about, seeking for this one or that. All was terror, confusion, and dismay.

"Oh, here is Mr. Linton!" cried several, as, with his domino on his arm, pale, and like one terror-struck, he entered the room. "What is it, Mr. Linton? Do you know what has happened?"

"Get Mrs. Kennyfeck and the girls away," whispered he to a friend, hurriedly; "tell them something—anything—but take them from this."

"What!" exclaimed Meek, to whom Linton had whispered something, but in a voice too low to be clearly audible.

"Kennyfeck is murdered!" said Linton, louder.

As if the terrible tidings had floated on the air, in an instant it was on every tongue, and vibrating in every ear; and then, in heartrending screams of passionate grief, the cry of the widow and her children burst forth, cry following cry in wild succession. Seized with an hysteric paroxysm, Mrs. Kennyfeck was carried to her room; while of her daughters, the elder sat mute, speechless, and, to all seeming,

insensible; the younger, struggling in convulsive passion to go to her father.

What a scene was that! How dreadful to mark the symbols of levity—the decorations by which Pleasure would mock the stern realities of Life—surrounded as they now were by suffering and sorrow! to see the groups as they stood; some ministering to one who had fainted, others conversing in low and eager whispers. The joyous smiles, the bright glances, were gone, as though they had been by masks assumed at will; tears furrowed their channels through the deep rouge, and convulsive sobs broke from beneath corsets where joy alone had vibrated before. While in the ball-room the scene was one of terror and dismay, a few had withdrawn into a small apartment adjoining the garden, to consult upon what the emergency might require. These were drawn together by Linton, and included Sir Andrew MacFarline, the Chief Justice, Meek, and a few others of lesser note. In a few words Linton informed them that he heard the tidings as he passed through the hall; that a peasant, taking the mountain path to Scariff, had come upon the spot where the murder was committed, and found the body still warm, but lifeless—"he also found this weapon, the bore of which was dirty from a recent discharge as he took it up."

"Why, this pistol is Mr. Cashel's!" exclaimed Sir Andrew, examining the stock closely; "I know it perfectly—I have fired with it myself a hundred times."

"Impossible, my dear Sir Andrew!" cried Linton, eagerly. "You must be mistaken."

"Where is Mr. Cashel?" asked the Chief Justice.

"No one seems to know," replied Linton. "At a very early hour this morning he left this in company with poor Kennyfeck. It would appear that they were not on the best of terms together; at least, some of the servants overheard angry words pass between them as they drove away."

"Let us call these people before us," said Sir Andrew.

"Not at present, Sir. It would be premature and indiscreet," interposed the Judge. Then, turning to Linton, he added, "Well, Sir, and after that?"

"After that we have no tidings of either of them."

"I'll swear to the pistol, onyhow," said Sir Andrew, who sat staring at the weapon, and turning it about in every direction.

"Of what nature were the differences between Cashel and Kennyfeck supposed to be?" asked Meek of Linton.

"It is impossible to collect, from the few and broken sentences which have been reported; possibly, dissatisfaction on Cashel's part at the difficulty of obtaining money; possibly, some misunderstanding

about his intentions regarding one of the girls, whom the Kennyfecks were silly enough to suppose he was going to marry."

A slight tap at the door here arrested their attention. It was Mr. Phillis, who came to say that footsteps had been heard in Mr. Cashel's dressing-room, although it was well known he himself had not returned.

"Might he not have returned and entered the room unseen, Sir?" said the Chief Justice, who cast a shrewd and piercing look upon the valet.

"Scarcely, my Lord, since he is known to every servant in the house, and people are passing and repassing in every direction."

"But there is every reason to believe that he has not returned at all," interposed Linton. "It is some one else has been heard in his dressing-room."

"Would it not be as well to despatch messengers to Drumcoologan," said Meek, "and assure ourselves of Cashel's safety? Up to this we are ignorant if he have not shared the fate of poor Kennyfeck."

"The very suggestion I was about to make. I'll take Phillis along with me, and set out this instant," cried Linton.

"We shall miss your assistance greatly here, Sir," said the Chief Justice.

"Your Lordship overvalues my poor ability; but I will hasten to the utmost, and be soon back again." And thus saying, he left the room, followed by Phillis.

"There must be an inquest at once," said the Chief Justice. "The Coroner has power to examine witnesses on oath; and it seems to me that some clue to the affair will present itself."

"As to this room, don't you think it were proper to inquire if any one be really within it?" asked Meek.

"Yes; we will proceed thither together," replied the Judge.

"I canna be mistaken in the pistol; I'll swear to that," chimed in Sir Andrew, whose whole thoughts were centred on that object.

"Well, Mr. Goring," said Meek, as that gentleman advanced to meet them in the corridor, "have you obtained any clue to this sad affair?"

The magistrate drew near, and whispered a few words in the other's ear. Meek started, and grasped the speaker's arm convulsively; then, after a pause, said, "Tell the Chief Justice." Mr. Goring approached, and said something in a low voice to the Judge.

"Be cautious, Sir; take care to whom you mention these circumstances, lest they be bruited about before we can examine into them," said the Chief Justice; then retiring into a window with Sir Andrew and Meek, he continued: "This gentleman has just informed me that the impress of a boot with a high heel has been discovered near the

spot where the murder was committed; which boot exactly tallies with that worn by Mr. Cashel."

"The pistol is his; I'll tak my oath on that," muttered Sir Andrew.

"Here's Phillis coming back," said Meek. "What's the matter, Phillis?"

"Mr. Linton sent me back, Sir, to say that the ivy which covered the wall on the east end of the house has been torn down, and seems to infer that some one must have climbed up it, to reach my master's dressing-room."

"This is a very important circumstance," said the Chief Justice. "Let us examine the room at once." And so saying, he led the way towards it.

Not a word was spoken as the party passed along the corridor and ascended the stairs; each feared, even by a syllable, to betray the terrible suspicions that were haunting his mind. It was a solemn moment; and so their looks and gestures bespoke it. The house itself had suddenly become silent; scarce a sound was heard within that vast building, which so late had rung with revelry and joy. A distant door would clap, or a faintly-heard shriek from some one still suffering from the recent shock; but all else was hushed and still.

"That is the room," said Meek, pointing to a door, beneath which, although it was now daybreak, a stream of light issued; and, slight as the circumstance was, the looks exchanged among the party seemed to give it a significance.

The Chief Justice advanced and tapped at the door. Immediately a voice was heard from within that all recognised as Cashel's, asking,

"Who's there?"

"We want you, Mr. Cashel," said the Judge, in an accent which all the instincts of his habit had not rendered free from a slight tremor.

The door was immediately thrown wide, and Roland stood before them. He had not changed his dress since his arrival, and his torn sleeve and blood-stained trousers at once caught every eye that was fixed upon him. The disorder, too, was not confined to his own haggard look; the room itself was littered with papers and letters, with clothes strewn carelessly in every direction; and, conspicuously amid all, an open pistol-case was seen, from which one of the weapons was missing. A mass of charred paper lay within the fender, and a great heap of paper lay, as it were ready for burning, beside the hearth. There was full time for those who stood there to notice all these particulars, since neither spoke, but each gazed on the other in terrible uncertainty. Cashel was the first to break the silence.

"Well, Sirs," said he, in a voice that only an effort made calm,

"are my friends so very impatient at my absence that they come to seek me in my dressing-room ?"

"The dreadful event that has just occurred, Sir," said the Judge, "makes apology for our intrusion unnecessary. We are here from duty, Mr. Cashel, not inclination, still less caprice."

The solemnity of manner in which he spoke, and the grave faces around him on every side, seemed to apprise Roland that bad tidings awaited him, and he looked eagerly to each for an explanation. At length, as none spoke, he said:

"Will no one vouchsafe to put an end to this mystification? What I pray, is this event that has happened ?"

"Mr. Kennyfeck has been murdered," said the Judge.

Roland staggered backwards, and grasped a chair for support. "When?—How?—Where?" said he, in a low voice, every accent of which trembled.

"All as yet is hidden in mystery, Sir. We know nothing beyond the fact that his dead body was discovered in the Gap of Ennismore, and that a pistol-shot had penetrated his brain." Sir Andrew grasped the weapon more tightly as these words were uttered.

"You left this in his company, Mr. Cashel?" asked Goring.

"Yes; we set out at daybreak for Drumcoologan, where an affair of business required our presence. We spent the whole of the day together, and as evening drew nigh, and our business had not been completed, I resolved to hasten back here, leaving him to follow whenever he could."

"You have been on the best terms together, I believe?" said Goring.

"Stay—I cannot permit this," interposed the Chief Justice, authoritatively. "There must be nothing done here which is not strictly honourable as well as legal. It is right that Mr. Cashel should understand that when an event of this nature has occurred, no one, however high his station, or unblemished his fame, can claim exemption from that scrutiny which the course of justice demands; and the persons latest in the company of the deceased are more peculiarly those exposed to such inquiry. I would, therefore, caution him against answering any questions here, which may be prejudicial hereafter."

"Do I understand you aright, my Lord?" said Cashel, whose whole frame trembled with agitation as he spoke. "Do your words imply that I stand here in the light of a suspected party?"

"I mean to say, Sir," replied the Judge, "that so long as doubt and obscurity veil the history of a crime, the accusation hangs over the community at large among whom it was enacted, and that those who were last seen in the presence of the victim have the greatest obligation to disconnect themselves with the sad event."

"But you stopped me while about to do so," cried Roland, angrily.

"I cautioned you, rather, against any disclosures which, whatever your innocence, might augment suspicion against you," said the Judge, mildly.

"These distinctions are too subtle for me, my Lord. The insult of such an accusation ought to be enough, without the aggravation of chicanery." Then, turning to Meek, Roland went on—"You, at least, are above this meanness, and will listen to me patiently. Look here." He took a sheet of paper as he spoke, and proceeded with a pen to mark out the direction of the two roads from Drumcoologan to Tubbermore. "Here stands the village; the road by which we travelled in the morning takes this line, skirting the base of the mountain towards the north: the path by which I returned follows a shorter course, and after crossing a little rivulet here, comes out at Ennismore, somewhere about this point."

Just as Roland's description reached thus far, a large drop of blood oozed from his wounded hand, and fell heavily upon the paper. There seemed something so terribly significant in its falling exactly on the very spot where the murdered body was found, that each looked at the other in anxious dread; and then, as if with a common impulse, every eye was bent on Cashel, who, heart-sick with indignant anger, stood unable to utter a word.

"I pray you, Sir, do not misconstrue my advice," said the Judge, mildly, "nor resent a counsel intended for your good. Every explanation you may offer, hereafter, will be serviceable to your case; every detail you enter into, now, necessarily vague, and unsupported as it must be by other testimony, will only be injurious to you."

Cashel seated himself in a chair, and crossing his arms, seemed to be lost in thought; then, suddenly starting to his feet, he cried,

"Is all this a deep-laid scheme against my honour and my life, or do you, indeed, desire to trace this crime to its author? If so, let us mount our horses and scour the country; let us search every cabin; let us try if some discovery of a weapon——"

"Ech, Sirs, we hae the weapon!" said Sir Andrew, with a sardonic grin; "an' it's muckle like to its brither yonder," pointing to the open pistol-case.

Roland turned suddenly, and now for the first time perceived that one of his pistols was missing from the case. Up to this moment his anger at the suspicions directed towards him were mingled with a degree of contemptuous disregard of them; but now, suddenly, a terrible fear shot through his heart that he was in the meshes of some deep-laid scheme for his ruin; and his mind ran over in eager haste every circumstance that seemed to point towards guilt. His presence with Kennyfeck on the mountain—his departure from

Drumcoologan alone — his unexplained reappearance in his own chamber, disordered and littered as it stood—his torn dress—his bleeding fingers—and lastly, the missing pistol—arose in terrible array before him; and, with a heart-sick sigh, he laid his forehead on the table, and never uttered a word.

It was at this juncture that a groom, splashed and heated from a hard ride, placed a small bit of twisted paper in Mr. Goring's hand. It was written with a pencil, and ran thus:

"Gap of Ennismore.

"Dear G.,

"It looks badly; but I fear you have no other course than to arrest him. In fact, it is too late for anything else. Consult Malone and Meek.

"Yours, in great haste,

"T. Linton."

Goring handed the note to the Chief Justice, who, having read it, passed it on to Meek. A nod from the latter, as he refolded the paper, seemed to accord concurrence with the counsel.

"Would it not be better to defer this till after the inquest?" he whispered.

"Are ye certain o' findin' him when ye want him?" dryly remarked Sir Andrew.

The Chief Justice conferred for a few seconds with Meek apart, and then approaching Cashel, addressed him in a tone inaudible to all but himself:

"It would be excessively painful to us, Mr. Roland Cashel, to do anything which should subject you to vulgar remark or impertinent commentary; and as, until some further light be thrown upon this sad catastrophe, your detention is absolutely necessary, may I ask that you will submit to this rigour, without compelling us to any measures to enforce it."

"Am I a prisoner, my Lord?" asked Roland, growing lividly pale as he spoke.

"Not precisely, Sir. No warrant has been issued against you; but as it is manifestly for your advantage to disprove any suspicions that may attach to you in this unhappy affair, I hope you will see the propriety of remaining where you are until they be entirely removed."

Roland bowed coldly, and said,

"May I ask to be left alone?"

"Of course, Sir; we have neither the right nor the inclination to obtrude ourselves upon you. I ought to mention, perhaps, that if you desire to confer with any friend——"

"Friend!" echoed Cashel, in bitter derision; "such friends as I have seen around my table make the selection difficult."

"I used the phrase somewhat technically, Sir, as referring to a legal adviser," said the Judge, hastily.

"I thank you, my Lord," replied Roland, haughtily. "I am a plain man, and am well aware that in *your* trade truth is no match for falsehood." He walked to the window as he spoke, and by his gesture seemed to decline further colloquy.

The Chief Justice moved slowly away, followed by the others; Meek withdrawing last of all, and seeming to hesitate whether he should not say something as he went. At last he turned and said:

"I sincerely trust, Mr. Cashel, that you will not connect me with this most painful suspicion; your own good sense will show you how common minds may be affected by a number of concurring circumstances; and how, in fact, truth may require the aid of ingenuity to reconcile and explain them."

"I am not certain that I understand your meaning, Sir," said Cashel, sternly; "but when a number of 'concurring circumstances' seemed to point out those with whom I associated as blacklegs, parasites, and calumniators, I gave them the benefit of a doubt, and believed them to be gentlemen; I almost expected they might return the favour when occasion offered."

For a second or two Meek seemed as if about to reply; but he moved noiselessly away at last and closed the door, leaving Roland alone with his own distracted thoughts.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Are there not proofs enough?
Or can the stubborn mind reject all truth
And cling to fallacy?

THE WILL.

WHAT a change did Tubbermore present to its aspect of the day before! All the emblems of joy and festivity, all the motley of pleasure, all the gay troops of guests hastening onward in glowing eagerness and anticipation, were gone; and in their stead a dreary and mysterious silence brooded over the place, interrupted at intervals by the bustle of some departure. For thus, without one word of sympathy, without even a passing good-by, Roland's "friends" hurried away, as if flying from the very memories of the spot.

It was a dreary winter's day; the dark leaden clouds that flitted past, and the long sighing wind, seemed to add their sad influence to the melancholy. The house itself already appeared to feel its altered

fortunes. Most of the windows were closed and shuttered; the decorations of rare plants and shrubs and lamps were removed; instead of the movement of liveried servants to and fro, ill-favoured and coarse-clad men, the underlings of the law, crept stealthily about, noticing each circumstance of the locality, and conferring together in mysterious whispers. Mounted messengers, too, came and went with a haste that boded urgency; and post-horses were each moment arriving to carry away those whose impatience to leave was manifested in a hundred ways. Had the air of the place been infected with some pestilential malady, their eagerness could scarce have been greater. All the fretful irritability of selfishness, all the peevish discontent of petty natures, exhibited themselves without shame; and envious expressions towards those fortunate enough to "get away first," and petulant complaints over their own delay, were bandied on every side.

A great table was laid for breakfast in the dining-room as usual. All the luxuries and elegances that graced the board on former occasions were there, but a few only took their places. Of these, Frobisher and some military men were the chief. They, indeed, showed comparatively little of that anxiety to be gone so marked in the others. The monotony of the barrack and the parade was not attractive, and they lingered like men who, however little they had of pleasure here, had even less of inducement to betake them elsewhere.

Meek had been the first to make his escape, by taking the post-horses intended for another, and already was many miles on his way towards Dublin. The Chief Justice and his family were the next. From the hour of the fatal event, Mrs. Malone had assumed a judicial solemnity of demeanour that produced a great impression upon the beholders, and seemed to convey, by a kind of reflected light, the old Judge's gloomiest forebodings of the result.

Mrs. Leicester White deferred her departure to oblige Mr. Howle, who was making a series of sketches for the *Pictorial Paul Pry*, showing not only the various façades of Tubbermore House, but several interesting "interiors:" such as the "Ball-room when the fatal tidings arrived;" "Dressing-room of Roland Cashel, Esq., when entered by the Chief Justice and his party;" the most effective of all being a very shadowy picture of the "Gap of Ennismore—the scene of the murder;" the whole connected by a little narrative so ingeniously drawn up as to give public opinion a very powerful bias against Cashel, whose features, in the woodcut, would in themselves have made a formidable indictment.

Of the Kennyfecks, few troubled themselves with even a casual inquiry: except the fact that a fashionable physician had been sent for to Dublin, little was known about them. But where was Linton all this while? Some averred that he had set out for the capital, to obtain the highest legal assistance for his friend; others, that he was

so overwhelmed by the terrible calamity as to have fallen into a state of fatuous insensibility. None, however, could really give any correct account of him. He had left Tubbermore, but in what direction none could tell.

As the day wore on, a heavy rain began to fall; and of those who still remained in the house, little knots of two and three assembled at the windows, to watch for the arrival of their wished-for "posters," or to speculate upon the weather. Another source of speculation there was besides. Some hours before, a magistrate, accompanied by a group of ill-dressed and vulgar-looking men, had been seen to pass the house, and take the path which led to the Gap of Ennismore. These formed the Inquest, who were to inquire into the circumstances of the crime, and whose verdict, however unimportant in a strictly legal sense, was looked for with considerable impatience by some of the company. To judge from the anxious looks that were directed towards the mountain-road, or the piercing glances which at times were given through telescopes in that direction, one would have augured that some, at least, of those there, were not destitute of sympathy for him whose guests they had been, and beneath whose roof they still lingered. A very few words of those that passed between them will best answer how this impression is well founded.

"Have you sent your groom off, Upton?" asked Frobisher, as he stood with a coffee-cup in his hand at the window.

"Yes, he passed the window full half an hour ago."

"They are confoundedly tedious," said Jennings, half suppressing a yawn. "I thought those kind of fellows just gave a look at the body, and pronounced their verdict at once."

"So they do when it's one of their own class; but in the case of a gentleman they take a prodigious interest in examining his watch, and his purse, and his pocket-book; and, in fact, it is a grand occasion for prying as far as possible into his private concerns."

"I'll double our bet, Upton, if you like," said Frobisher, languidly.

The other shook his head negatively.

"Why, the delay is clearly in your favour, man. If they were strong in their convictions, they'd have brought him in guilty an hour ago."

"That is my opinion too," said Jennings.

"Well, here goes. Two fifties be it," cried Upton.

Frobisher took out his memorandum-book and wrote something with a pencil.

"Isn't that it?" said he, showing the lines to Upton.

"Just so. 'Wilful murder,'" muttered the other, reading.

"You have a great 'pull' upon me, Upton," said Frobisher; "by Jove! if you were generous, you'd give me odds."

"How so?"

"Why, you saw his face since the affair, and I didn't."

"It would need a better physiognomist than I am to read it. He looked exactly as he always does; a thought paler, perhaps, but no other change."

"Here comes a fellow with news," said Jennings, throwing open the window. "I say, my man, is it over?"

"No, Sir; the Jury want to see one of Mr. Cashel's boots."

Jennings closed the sash, and lighting a cigar, sat down in an easy-chair. A desultory conversation here arose among some of the younger military men whether a coroner's verdict were final, and whether a "fellow could be hanged" when it pronounced him guilty; the astute portion of the debaters inclining to the opinion that although this was not the case in England, such would be "law" in Ireland. Then the subject of confiscation was entertained, and various doubts and surmises arose as to what would become of Tubbermore when its proprietor had been executed; with sly jests about the reversionary rights of the Crown, and the magnanimity of extending mercy at the price of a great landed estate. These filled up the time for an hour or so more, interspersed with conjectures as to Cashel's present frame of mind, and considerable wonderment why he hadn't "bolted" at once.

At last Upton's groom was seen approaching at a tremendous pace; and in a few minutes after he had pulled up at the door, and dismounting with a spring, hastened into the house.

"Well, Robert, how did it go?" cried Upton, as, followed by the rest, he met him in the hall.

"You've lost, Sir," said the man, wiping his forehead.

"Confound the rascals! But what are the words of the verdict?"

"'Wilful murder,' Sir."

"Of course," said Frobisher, coolly; "they could give no other."

"It's no use betting against you," cried Upton, pettishly. "You are the luckiest dog in Europe."

"Come, I'll give you a chance," said Frobisher; "double or quit that they hang him."

"No, no; I've lost enough on him. I'll not have it."

"Well, I suppose we've nothing to wait for now," yawned Jennings. "Shall we start?"

"Not till we have luncheon, I vote," cried an Infantry Sub; and his suggestion met general approval. And while they are seated at a table where exquisite meats and rarest wines stimulated appetite and provoked excess, let us turn for a few brief moments to him who, still their entertainer, sat in his lone chamber, friendless and deserted.

So rapid had been the succession of events which occupied one single night, that Roland could not believe it possible months had

not passed over. Even then, he found it difficult to disentangle the real circumstances from those fancied results his imagination had already depicted; many of the true incidents appearing far more like fiction than the dreamy fancies his mind invented. His meeting with Enrique, for instance, was infinitely less probable than that he should have fought a duel with Linton; and so, in many other cases, his faculties wavered between belief and doubt, till his very senses reeled with the confusion. Kennyfeck's death alone stood out from this chaotic mass, clear, distinct, and palpable, and, as he sat brooding over this terrible fact, he was totally unconscious of its bearing upon his own fortunes. Selfishness formed no part of his nature; his fault lay in the very absence of self-esteem, and the total deficiency of that individuality which prompts men to act up to a self-created standard. He could sorrow for him who was no more, and from whom he had received stronger proofs of devotion than from all his so-called friends; he could grieve over the widowed mother and the fatherless girls, for whose destitution he felt, he knew not how or wherefore, a certain culpability; but of himself and his own critical position, not a thought arose. The impressions that no effort of his own could convey, fell with a terrific shock upon him when suggested by another.

He was seated at his table, trying, for the twentieth time, to collect his wandering thoughts, and determine what course to follow, when a tap was heard at his door, and it opened at the same instant.

"I am come, Sir," said Mr. Goring, with a voice full of feeling, "to bring you sad tidings; but for which events may have, in a measure, prepared you." He paused; perhaps hoping that Cashel would spare him the pain of continuing; but Roland never spoke.

"The inquest has completed its labours," said Goring, with increasing agitation; "and the verdict is one of 'wilful murder.' "

"It was a foul and terrible crime," said Cashel, shuddering; "the poor fellow was animated with kind intentions and benevolent views towards the people. In all our intercourse, he displayed but one spirit——"

"Have a care, Sir," said Goring, mildly. "It is just possible that, in the frankness of the moment, something may escape you which hereafter you might wish unsaid; and standing in the position you now do——"

"How so? What position, Sir, do I occupy, that should preclude me from the open expression of my sentiments?"

"I have already told you, Sir, that the verdict of the jury was wilful murder, and I hold here in my hand the warrant for your arrest."

"As the criminal? as the murderer?" cried Cashel, with a voice

almost like a shriek of agony. Goring bowed his head, and Roland fell powerless on the floor.

Summoning others to his aid, Goring succeeded in lifting him up and placing him on a bed. A few drops of blood that issued from his mouth, and his heavy snoring respiration, indicated an apoplectic seizure. Messengers were sent in various directions to fetch a doctor. Tiernay was absent, and it was some hours ere one could be found. Large bleeding and quiet produced the usual effects, and towards evening Cashel's consciousness had returned; but memory was still clouded and incoherent, and he lay without speaking, and almost without thought.

After the lapse of about a week he was able to leave his bed and creep about his chamber, whose altered look contributed to recal his mind to the past. All his papers and letters had been removed; the window was secured with iron stanchions; and policemen stood sentry at the door. He remembered everything that had occurred, and sat down in patient thought to consider what he should do.

He learned without surprise, but not without a pang, that of all his friends not one had remained—not one had offered a word of counsel in his affliction, or of comfort in his distress. He asked after Mr. Corrigan, and heard that he had quitted the country, with his granddaughter, on the day before the terrible event. Tiernay, it was said, had accompanied them to Dublin, and not since returned. Roland was, then, utterly friendless! What wonder if he became as utterly reckless, as indifferent to life, as life seemed valueless? And so was it: he heard with indifference the order for his removal to Limerick, although that implied a gaol! He listened to the vulgar, but kindly-meant counsels of his keepers, who advised him to seek legal assistance, with a smile of half-contempt. The obdurate energy of a martyrdom seemed to take possession of him; and, so far from applying his mind to disentangle the web of suspicion around him, he watched, with a strange interest, the convergence of every minute circumstance towards the proof of his guilt; a secret vindictiveness whispering to his heart that the day would come when his innocence should be proclaimed; and then, what tortures of remorse would be theirs who had brought him to a felon's death!

Each day added to the number of these seeming proofs, and the newspapers, in paragraphs of gossiping, abounded with circumstances that had already convinced the public of Cashel's guilt: and how often do such shadowy convictions throw their gloom over the prisoner's dock! One day, the fact of the boot-track tallying precisely with Roland's, filled the town; another, it was the pistol-wadding—part of a letter addressed to Cashel—had been discovered. Then, there were vague rumours afloat that the causes of Cashel's ani-

mosity to Kennyfeck were not so secret as the world fancied; that there were persons of credit to substantiate and explain them; and, lastly, it was made known, that among the papers seized on Cashel's table was a letter, just begun by himself, but to whom addressed uncertain, which ran thus:

"As these in all likelihood may be the last lines I shall ever write——"

Never, in all the gaudy glare of his prosperity, had he occupied more of public attention. The metaphysical penny-a-liners speculated upon the influence his old buccaneer habits might have exercised upon a mind so imperfectly trained to civilisation; and amused themselves with guesses as to how far some Indian "cross" in blood might not have contributed to his tragic vengeance. Less scrupulous scribes invented deeds of violence: in a word, there seemed a kind of impulse abroad to prove him guilty; and it would have been taken as a piece of casuistry, or a mawkish sympathy with crime, to assume the opposite. Not, indeed, that any undertook so ungracious a task; the tide of accusation ran uninterrupted and unbroken. The very friendless desolation in which he stood was quoted and commented on to this end. One alone of all his former friends made an effort in his favour, and ventured to insinuate that his guilt was far from certain. This was Lord Charles Frobisher, who, seeing in the one-sidedness of public opinion the impossibility of obtaining a bet, tried thus to "get up" an "innocent party," in the hope of a profitable wager.

But what became of Linton all this time? His game was a difficult one; and to enable him to play it successfully he needed reflection. To this end he affected to be so shocked by the terrible event as to be incapable of mixing in society. He retired, therefore, to his cottage near Dublin, and for some weeks lived a life of perfect seclusion. Mr. Phillis accompanied him; for Linton would not trust him out of his sight till—as he muttered in his own phrase—"all was over."

This was, indeed, the most eventful period of Linton's life; and with consummate skill he saw that any move on his part would be an error. It is true that, through channels with whose workings he was long conversant, he contributed the various paragraphs to the papers by which Cashel's guilt was foreshadowed; his knowledge of Roland suggesting many a circumstance well calculated to substantiate the charge of crime. If he never ventured abroad into the world, he made himself master of all its secret whisperings; and heard how he was himself commended for delicacy and good feeling, with the satisfaction of a man who glories in a cheat. And how many are there who play false in life, less from the gain than the gratification of vanity!—a kind of diabolical pride in outwitting and overreaching those whose good faith has made them weak! The

polite world does not take the same interest in deeds of terror as do their more humble brethren; they take their "horrors" as they do their one glass of Tokay at dessert—a something, of which a little more would be nauseating. The less polished classes were, therefore, those who took the greatest pleasure in following up every clue and tracing each circumstance that pointed to Roland's guilt; and so, at last, his name was rarely mentioned among those with whom so lately he had lived in daily, almost hourly, companionship.

When Linton, then, deemed the time expired, which his feelings of grief and shame had demanded for retirement, he reappeared in the world pretty much as men had always seen him. A very close observer, if he would have suffered any one to be such, might have perhaps detected the expression of care in certain wrinkles round his mouth, and in the extra blackness of his whiskers, where grey hairs had dared to show themselves; but to the world at large these signs were inappreciable. To them he was the same even-tempered, easy-mannered man they ever saw him. Nor was this accomplished without an effort; for, however Linton saw the hour of his vengeance draw nigh, he also perceived that all his personal plans of fortune and aggrandisement had utterly failed. The hopes he had so often cherished were all fled. His title to the cottage, his prospect of a seat in Parliament, the very sums he had won at play, and which to a large amount remained in Cashel's hands, he now perceived were all forfeited to revenge. The price was, indeed, a heavy one! and already he began to feel it so. Many of his creditors had abstained from pressing him so long as his intimacy with Cashel gave promise of future solvency. That illusion was now dispelled, and each post brought him dunning epistles, and threatening notices of various kinds. Exposures menaced him from men whose vindictiveness he was well aware of; but far more perilous than all these were his relations with Tom Keane, who continued to address letter after letter to him, craving advice and pecuniary assistance, in a tone where menace was even more palpable than entreaty. To leave these unreplied to, might have been dangerous in the extreme; to answer them, even more perilous. No other course was, then, open than to return to Tubbermore, and endeavour, in secret, to confer with this man face to face. There was not any time to lose. Cashel's trial was to take place at the ensuing assizes, which now were close at hand. Keane was to figure there as an important witness. It was absolutely necessary to see him, and caution him as to the nature of the evidence he should give, nor suffer him in the exuberance of his zeal to prove "too much."

Under pretence, therefore, of a hurried trip to London, he left his house one evening, and went on board the packet at Kingstown, dismissing his carriage as if about to depart; then, suddenly affecting

to discover that his luggage had been carried away by mistake, he landed, and set out with post-horses across country towards the western road. Before midnight he was safe in the mail, on his way to Limerick; and by daybreak on the following morning he was standing in the wood of Tubbermore, and gazing with a thoughtful head upon the house, whose shuttered windows and barred doors told of its altered destiny.

From thence he wandered onward towards the cottage—some strange, inexplicable interest over him—to see once more the spot he had so often fancied to be his own, and where, with a fervour not altogether unreal, he had sworn to pass his days in tranquil solitude. Brief as had been the interval since last he stood there, the changes were considerable. The flower-pots were trampled and trodden down, the palings smashed, the ornamental trees and shrubs were injured and broken by the cattle; traces of reckless haste and carelessness were seen in the broken gates and torn gate-posts; while fragments of packing-cases, straw, and paper littered the walks and the turf around.

Looking through the windows, broken in many places, he could see the cottage was perfectly dismantled. Everything was gone: not a trace remained of those who for so many years had called it home! The desolation was complete; nor was it without its depressing influence upon him who stood there to mark it; for, strange enough, there are little spots in the minds of those, where evil actions are oftenest cradled, that form the refuge of many a tender thought! Linton remembered the cottage as he saw it bright in the morning sun; or, more cheerful still, as the closed curtains and the blazing fire gave a look of homelike comfort to which the veriest wanderer is not insensible; and now it was cold and dark. He had no self-accusings as to the cause. It was, to him, one of those sad mutations which the course of fortune is ever effecting. He even went further, and fancied how different had been their fate if they had not rejected his own alliance.

"In this world of ours," muttered he, "the cards we are dealt by Fortune would nearly always suffice to win, had we but skill. These people had a noble game before them, but, forsooth, they did not fancy their partner! And see what is come of it—ruin on every side!"

Gloomy thoughts over his own opportunities neglected—over eventful moments left to slip by unprofitably—stole over him. Many of his late speculations had been unsuccessful; he had had heavy losses on the "turf" and the "'Change." He had failed in promises by which menacing dangers had been long averted. His enemies would soon be upon him, and he was ill provided for the encounter.

Vengeance alone, of all his aspirations, seemed to prosper; and he tried to revel in that thought as a compensation for every failure.

Nor was this unmixed with fear. What if Cashel should enter upon a defence by exposing the events of that last night at Tubbermore? What if he should produce the forged deed in open court? Who was to say that Enrique himself might not be forthcoming to prove his falsehood? Again: how far could he trust Tom Keane? might not the fellow's avarice suggest a tyranny impossible to endure? Weighty considerations were these, and full of their own peril. Linton paused beside the lake to ruminate, and for some time was deep buried in thought. A light rustling sound at last aroused him; he looked up, and perceived, directly in front of him, the very man of whom he was thinking—Tom Keane himself.

Both stood still, each fixedly regarding the other without speaking. It seemed a game in which he who made the first move should lose. So, certainly, did Linton feel; but not so Tom Keane, who, with an easy composure that all the other's "breeding" could not compass, said:

"Well, Sir, I hope you like your work?"

"*My* work! *my* work! How can you call it *mine*, my good friend?" replied Linton, with a great effort to appear as much at ease as the other.

"Just as ould Con Corrigan built the little pier we're standin' on this minit, though his own hands didn't lay a stone of it."

"There's no similarity between the cases whatever," said Linton, with a well-feigned laugh. "Here there was a plan—an employer—hired labourers engaged to perform a certain task."

"Well, well," broke in Keane, impatiently; "sure we're not in 'Coort,' that you need make a speech. 'Twas your own doing: deny it if you like, but don't drive me to prove it."

The tone of menace in which these words were uttered was increased by the fact, now for the first time apparent to Linton, that Tom Keane had been drinking freely that morning, and was still under the strong excitement of liquor.

Linton passed his arm familiarly within the other's, and in a voice of deep meaning, said, "Were you only as cautious as you are courageous, Tom, there's not a man in Europe I'd rather take as my partner in a dangerous enterprise. You are a glorious fellow in the hour of peril, but you are a child, a mere child, when it's over."

Keane did not speak, but a leer of inveterate cunning seemed to answer this speech.

"I say this, Tom," said Linton, coaxingly, "because I see the risk to which your natural frankness will expose you. There are fellows prowling about on every side to scrape up information about this

affair; and as, in some unguarded moment, when a glass too much has made the tongue run freely, any man may say things, to explain which away afterwards he is often led to go too far——You understand me, Tom?"

"I do, Sir," said the other, nodding shortly.

"It was on that account I came down here to-day, Tom. The trial is fixed for the 15th: now, the time is so short between this and that, you can surely keep a strict watch over yourself till 'all is over?'"

"And what then, Sir?" asked Tom, with a cunning glance beneath his brows.

"After that," rejoined Linton, affecting to mistake the meaning of the question—"after that, the law takes its course, and you trouble yourself no more on the matter."

"And is that all, Mr. Linton?—is that all?" asked the man, as, freeing himself from the other's arm, he drew himself up to his full height, and stood directly in front of him.

"I must own, Tom, that I don't understand your question."

"I'll make it plain and azy for you, then," said Keane, with a hardened determination in his manner. "'Twas you yourself put me up to this business. 'Twas you that left the pistol in my possession. 'Twas you that towld me how it was to be done, and where to do it; and"—here his voice became deep, thick, and guttural with passion—"and, by the 'mortal God! if I'm to hang for it, so will you too."

"Hang!" exclaimed Linton. "Who talks of hanging? or what possible danger do you run—except, indeed, what your own indiscreet tongue may bring upon you?"

"Isn't it as good to die on the gallows as on the roadside?" asked the other, fiercely. "What betther am I for what I done, tell me that?"

"I have told you before, and I tell you again, that when 'all is over' you shall be amply provided for."

"And why not before?" said he, almost insolently.

"If you must know the reason," said Linton, affecting a smile, "you shall hear it. Your incaution would make you at once the object of suspicion, were you to be seen with money at command as freely as you will have it hereafter."

"Will you give me that in writin'?—will you give it to me undher your hand?" asked Keane, boldly.

"Of course I will," said Linton, who was too subtle a tactician to hesitate about a pledge which could not be exacted on the instant.

"That's what I call talkin' fair," said Keane; "an', by my sowl, it's the best of your play to trate me well."

"There is only one thing in the world could induce me to do otherwise."

"An' what's that, Sir?"

"Your daring to use a threat to me!" said Linton, sternly. "There never was the man that tried that game—and there have been some just as clever fellows as Tom Keane who did try it—who didn't find that they met their match."

"I only ax what's right and fair," said the other, abashed by the daring effrontery of Linton's air.

"And you shall have it, and more. You shall either have enough to settle in America, or, if you prefer it, to live abroad."

"And why not stay at home here?" said Tom, doggedly.

"To blurt out your secret in some drunken moment, and be hanged at last!" said Linton, with a cutting irony.

"An', may be, tell how one Misther Linton put the wickedness first in my head," added Tom, as if finishing the sentence.

Linton bit his lip, and turned angrily away to conceal the mortification the speech had caused him. "My good friend," said he, in a deliberate voice, "you think that whenever you upset the boat you will drown *me;* and I have half a mind to dare you to it, just to show you the shortness of your calculation. Trust me"—there was a terrible distinctness in his utterance of these words—"trust me, that in all my dealings with the world, I have left very little at the discretion of what are called men of honour. I leave nothing, absolutely nothing, in the power of such as you."

At last did Linton strike the right chord of the fellow's nature; and in his subdued and crestfallen countenance might be read the signs of his prostration.

"Hear me now attentively, Keane, and let my words rest well in your memory. The trial comes on on the 15th: your evidence will be the most important of all; but give it with the reluctance of a man who shrinks from bringing his landlord to the scaffold. You understand me? Let everything you say show the desire to screen Mr. Cashel. Another point: affect not to know anything save what you actually saw. You never can repeat too often the words, 'I didn't see it.' This scrupulous reliance on eyesight imposes well upon a Jury. These are the only cautions I have to give you. Your own natural intelligence will supply the rest. When all is finished, you will come up to Dublin, and call at a certain address which will be given you hereafter. And now we part. It is your own fault if you lose a friend who never deserted the man that stood by him."

"An' are you going back to Dublin now, Sir?" asked Keane, over whose mind Linton's influence had become dominant, and who actually dreaded to be left alone, and without his guidance.

Linton nodded an assent.

"But you'll be down here at the trial, Sir?" asked Tom, eagerly.

"I suspect not," said Linton. "If not summoned as a witness, I'll assuredly not come."

"Oh, murther!" exclaimed Tom. "I thought I'd have you in the 'Coort,' just to look up at you from time to time, to give me courage and make me feel bowld; for it does give me courage when I see you so calm and so azy, without as much as a tremble in your voice."

"It is not likely that I shall be there," rejoined Linton; "but mind, if I be, that you do *not* direct your eyes towards me. Remember, that every look you give, every gesture you make, will be watched and noted."

"I wondher how I'll get through it!" exclaimed the other, sorrowfully.

"You'll get through it admirably, man, if you'll only think that you are not the person in peril. It is your conscience alone can bring you into any danger."

"Well, I hope so! with the help of ——" The fellow stopped short, and a red flush of shame spread itself over features which in a whole lifelong had never felt a blush.

"I'd like to be able to give you something better than this, Tom," said Linton, as he placed a handful of loose silver in the other's palm; "but it is safer for the present that you should not be seen with much money."

"I owe more than this at Mark Shea's 'public,'" said Tom, looking discontentedly at the money.

"And why should you owe it?" said Linton, bitterly. "What is there in your circumstances to warrant debts of this kind?"

"Didn't I earn it—tell me that?" asked the ruffian, with a savage earnestness.

"I see that you are hopeless," said Linton, turning away in disgust. "Take your own course, and see where it will lead you."

"No—you mean where it will lead us," said the fellow, insolently.

"What! do you dare to threaten me! Now, once for all, let this have an end. I have hitherto treated you with candour and with kindness. If you fancy that my hate can be more profitable than my friendship, say so, and before one hour passes over your head I'll have you committed to prison as an accessary to the murder."

"I ax your pardon humbly—I didn't mean to anger yer Honer," said the other, in a servile tone. "I'll do everything you bid me—and sure you know best what ought to be done."

"Then let us part good friends," said Linton, holding out his hand towards him. "I see a boat coming over the lake which will drop me at Killaloe; we must not be seen together—so good-by, Tom, good-by."

"Good-by, and a safe journey to yer Honer," said Tom, as, touching his hat respectfully, he retired into the wood.

The boat which Linton descried was still above a mile from the shore, and he sat down upon a stone to await its coming. Beautiful

as that placid lake was, with its background of bold mountains, its scattered islands, and its jutting promontories, he had no eye for these, but followed with a peering glance the direction in which Tom Keane had departed.

"There are occasions," muttered he to himself, "when the boldest courses are the safest. Is this one of these? Dare I trust that fellow, or would this be better?" And, as if mechanically, he drew forth a double-barrelled pistol from his breast, and looked fixedly at it.

He arose from his seat, and sat down again—his mind seemed beset with hesitation and doubt; but the conflict did not last long, for he replaced the weapon, and walking down to the lake, dipped his fingers in the water and bathed his temples, saying to himself:

"Better as it is: over-caution is as great an error as foolhardiness."

With a dexterity acquired by long practice, he now disguised his features so perfectly that none could have recognised him; and by the addition of a wig and whiskers of bushy red hair, totally changed the character of his appearance. This he did, that at any future period he might not be recognised by the boatmen, who, in answer to his signal, now pulled vigorously towards the shore.

He soon bargained with them to leave him at Killaloe, and as they rowed along engaged them to talk about the country, in which he affected to be a tourist. Of course the late murder was the theme uppermost in every mind, and Linton marked with satisfaction how decisively the current of popular belief ran in attributing the guilt to Cashel.

With a perversity peculiar to the peasant, the Agent, whom they had so often inveighed against for cruelty in his lifetime, they now discovered to have been the type of all that was kind-hearted and benevolent; and had no hesitation in attributing his unhappy fate to an altercation in which he, with too rash a zeal, was the "poor man's advocate."

The last words he was heard to utter on leaving Tubbermore were quoted, as implying a condemnation on Cashel's wasteful extravagance, at a time when the poor around were "perishing of hunger." Even to Linton, whose mind was but too conversant with the sad truths of the story, these narratives assumed the strongest form of consistency and likelihood; and he saw how effectually circumstantial evidence can convict a man in public estimation, long before a jury are sworn to try him.

Crimes of this nature, now, had not been unfrequent in that district; and the country people felt a species of savage vengeance in urging their accusations against a "Gentleman," who had not what they reckoned as the extenuating circumstances to diminish or explain away his guilt.

"He wasn't turned out of his little place to die on the roadside," muttered one. "He wasn't threatened, like poor Tom Keane, to be 'starminated,'" cried another.

"And who is Tom Keane?" asked Linton.

"The gatekeeper up at the big house yonder, Sir; one that's lived man and boy nigh fifty years there; and Mr. Cashel swore he'd root him out, for all that!"

"Ay!" chimed in another, in a moralising whine, "an' see where he is himself, now!"

"I wondher now if they'd hang him, Sir?" asked one.

"Why not," asked Linton, "if he should be found guilty?"

"They say, Sir, the gentlemen can always pay for another man to be hanged instead of them. Musha, maybe 'tisn't true," added he, diffidently, as he saw the smile on Linton's face.

"I think you'll find that the right man will suffer in this case," said Linton; and a gleam of malignant passion shot from his dark eyes as he spoke.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

As I listened I thought myself guilty.—Warren Hastings.

For several days before that appointed for the trial of Roland Cashel, the assize town was crowded with visitors from every part of the island. Not a house, not a room was unoccupied, so intense was the interest to witness a cause into which so many elements of exciting story entered. His great wealth, his boundless extravagance, the singular character of his early life, gave rise to a hundred curious anecdotes, which the press circulated with a most unscrupulous freedom.

Nor did public curiosity stop at the walls of the prison; for every detail of his life, since the day of his committal, was carefully recorded by the papers. The unbroken solitude in which he lived; the apparent calm collectedness in which he awaited his trial; his resolute refusal to employ legal assistance; his seeming indifference to the alleged clues to the discovery of the murder, were commented on and repeated till they formed the table-talk of the land.

The only person with whom he desired to communicate was Doctor Tiernay; but the Doctor had left Ireland in company with old Mr. Corrigan and Miss Leicester, and none knew whither they had directed their steps.

Of all his former friends and acquaintances, Cashel did not appear

to remember one; nor, certainly, did they intrude themselves in any way upon his recollection. The Public, it is true, occupied themselves abundantly with his interests. Letters, some with signatures, the greater number without, were addressed to him, containing advices and counsels the strangest and most opposite, and requests, which to one in his situation were the most inappropriate. Exhortations to confess his crime came from some, evidently more anxious for the solution of a mystery than the repentance of a criminal. Some, suggested legal quibbles to be used at the trial; others, hinted at certain most skilful advocates, whose services had been crowned with success in the case of most atrocious wretches. A few, asked for autographs; and one, in a neat crowquill hand, with paper smelling strongly of musk, requested a lock of his hair!

If by any accident Cashel opened one of the epistles, he was certain to feel amused. It was, to him at least, a new view of life, and of that civilisation against which he now felt himself a rebel. Generally, however, he knew nothing of them: a careless indifference, a reckless disregard of the future, had taken complete possession of him; and the only impatience he ever manifested was at the slow march of the time which should elapse before the day of trial.

The day at length arrived; and even within the dreary walls of the prison were heard the murmured accents of excitement as the great hour drew nigh.

Mr. Goring at an early hour had visited the prisoner, to entreat him, for the last time, to abandon his mad refusal of legal aid; explaining forcibly that there were constantly cases occurring where innocence could only be asserted by disentangling the ingenious tissue with which legal astuteness can invest a circumstance. Cashel rejected this counsel calmly but peremptorily; and when pressed home by other arguments, in a moment of passing impatience confessed that he was "weary of life, and would make no effort to prolong it."

"Even so, Sir," said Goring, "there is here another question at issue. Are you satisfied to fill the dishonoured grave of a criminal? Does not the name by which men will speak of you hereafter possess any terror for you now?"

A slight tremor shook Cashel's voice as he replied, "Were I one who left kindred or attached friends behind him, these considerations would have their weight, nor would I willingly leave them the heritage of such disgrace; but I am alone in the world, without one to blush for my dishonour, or shed a tear over my sorrow. The calumny of my fellow-men will only fall on ears sealed by death; nor will their jeers break the slumber I am so soon to sleep."

Goring laboured hard to dissuade him from his resolve, but to no purpose. The only consolation of which Roland seemed capable arose

from the dogged indifference he felt as to the result, and the consciousness of an innocence he was too proud to assert.

From an early hour of the morning the Court was crowded. Many persons distinguished in the world of fashion were to be seen amid the gowned and wigged throng that filled the body of the building; and in the galleries were a vast number of ladies, whose elegance of dress told how much they regarded the scene as one of display, as well as of exciting interest. Some, had been frequent guests at his house; others, had often received him at their own; and there they sat, in eager expectancy to see how he would behave, to criticise his bearing, to scan his looks through their "*lorgnettes*," and note the accents in which he would speak. A few, indeed, of his more intimate friends denied themselves the treat such an exhibition promised; and it was plain to see how highly they estimated their own forbearance. Still, Frobisher and some of his set stood beneath the gallery, and watched the proceedings with interest.

Some routine business of an uninteresting nature over, the case of the King *versus* Roland Cashel was called, and the governor of the gaol was ordered to produce the prisoner. A murmur of intense interest quickly ran through the crowded assembly, and as suddenly was subdued to a dead silence as the crowd, separating, permitted the passage of two armed policemen, after whom Cashel walked, followed by two others. Scarcely had he merged from the dense throng and taken his place in the dock, when a buzz of astonishment went round; for the prisoner, instead of being dressed decorously in black, as is customary, or at least in some costume bespeaking care and respect, was attired in the very suit he wore on the eventful night of the murder, the torn sleeves and blood-stained patches attracting every eye around him. He was paler and thinner than his wont; and if his countenance was more deeply thoughtful, there was nothing in it that evinced anxiety, or even expectancy. As he entered the dock, they who stood nearest to him remarked that a slight flush stole over his face, and something that seemed painful to his feelings appeared to work within him. A brief effort overcame this, and he raised his eyes and carried his looks around the Court with the most perfect unconcern.

The prisoner was now arraigned, and the clerk proceeded to read over the indictment; after which came the solemn question, "How say you, prisoner, Guilty or Not Guilty?" Either not understanding the "quære" as directly addressed to himself, or conceiving it to be some formality not requiring an answer, Cashel stood in a calm and respectful silence for some minutes, when the Judge, in a mild voice, explained the meaning of the interrogation.

"Not Guilty, my Lord," said Cashel, promptly; and though the words were few, and those almost of course on such an occasion, the

feeling in the Court was manifestly in concurrence with the speaker. The routine detail of calling over the jury panel involving the privilege of "challenge," it became necessary to explain this to Cashel, whose ignorance of all legal forms being now so manifest, the Judge asked who was counsel for the prisoner.

"He has not named any, my Lord."

With patient kindness the Judge turned to the dock, and counselled him, even now, late as it was, to elect some one among the learned members of the bar, whose guidance would materially serve his interests, and save him from the many embarrassments his own unassisted efforts would produce.

"I thank you, my Lord, for your consideration," replied he, calmly, "but if I be innocent of this crime, I stand in need of no skill to defend me. If guilty, I do not deserve it."

"Were guilt and innocence always easy of detection," said the Judge, "your remark might have some show of reason; but such is rarely the case; and once more I would entreat you to entrust your cause to some one conversant with our forms and acquainted with our duties."

"I am not guilty, my Lord," replied Roland, boldly, "nor do I fear that any artifice can make me appear such. I will not have counsel."

The Attorney-General here in a low voice addressed the Bench, and suggested that although the prisoner might not himself select a defender, yet the interests of justice, generally, requiring that the witnesses should be cross-examined, it would be well if the Court would appoint some one to that duty.

The Judge repeated the suggestion aloud, adding his perfect concurrence in its nature, and inviting the learned bar to lend a volunteer in the cause; when a voice called out, "I will willingly accept the office, my Lord, with your permission."

"Very well, Mr. Clare Jones," replied the Judge; and that gentleman, of whom so long we have lost sight, advanced to the front of the bar, beside the dock.

Cashel, during this scene, appeared like one totally uninterested in all that was going forward; nor did he even turn his head towards where his self-appointed advocate was standing. As the names of the jury were called over, Jones closely scrutinised each individual, keenly inquiring from what part of the county he came—whether he had resided as a tenant on the Cashel estate—and if he had, on any occasion, expressed himself strongly on the guilt or innocence of the accused. To all these details Roland listened with an interest the novelty suggested, but, it was plain to see, without any particle of that feeling which his own position might have called for. The jury were at length empannelled, and the trial began.

Few, even among the most accomplished weavers of narrative, can equal the skill with which a clever lawyer details the story of a criminal trial. The orderly sequence in which the facts occur—the neat equipoise in which matters are weighed—the rigid insistance upon some points, the insinuated probabilities and the likelihood of others—are all arranged and combined with a masterly power that more discursive fancies would fail in.

Events and incidents that to common intelligence appear to have no bearing on the case, arise, like unexpected witnesses, at intervals, to corroborate this, or to insinuate that. Time, place, distance, locality, the laws of light and sound, the phenomena of science, are all invoked, not with the abstruse pedantry of a bookworm, but with the ready-witted acuteness of one who has studied mankind in the parti-coloured page of real life.

To any one unaccustomed to these efforts, the effect produced is almost miraculous: conviction steals in from so many sources, that the mind, like a city assaulted on every side, is captured almost at once. All the force of cause and effect is often imparted to matters which are merely consecutive; and it requires patient consideration to disembarrass a case of much that is merely insinuated, and more that is actually speculative.

In the present instance everything was circumstantial; but so much the more did it impress all who listened, even to him who, leaning on the rails of the dock, now heard with wonderment how terribly consistent were all the events which seemed to point him out as guilty.

After a brief exordium, in which he professed his deep sorrow at the duty which had devolved on him, and his ardent desire to suffer nothing to escape him with reference to the prisoner save what the interests of truth and justice imperatively might call for, the Attorney-General entered upon a narrative of the last day of Mr. Kennyfeck's life; detailing with minute precision his departure from Tubbermore at an early hour in Mr. Cashel's company, and stating how something bordering upon altercation between them was overheard by the bystanders as they drove away. "The words themselves, few and unimportant as they might seem," added he, "under common circumstances, come before us with a terrible significance when remembered in connexion with the horrible event that followed." He then traced their course to Drumcoologan, where differences of opinion, trivial, some might call them, but of importance to call for weighty consideration here, repeatedly occurred respecting the tenantry and the management of the estate. These would all be proved by competent witnesses, he alleged; and he desired the Jury to bear in mind that such testimony should be taken as that of men much more disposed to think and speak well of Mr. Cashel, whose

very spendthrift tastes had the character of virtues in the peasants' eyes, in contrast with the careful and more scrupulous discretion practised by "the agent."

"You will be told, Gentlemen of the Jury," continued he, "how, after a day spent in continued differences of opinion, they separated at evening; one, to return to Tubbermore by the road; the other, by the less travelled path that led over the mountains. And here it is worthy of remark that Mr. Cashel, although ignorant of the way, a stranger, for the first time in his life in the district, positively refuses all offers of accompaniment, and will not even take a guide to show him the road. Mr. Kennyfeck continues for some time to transact business with the tenantry, and leaves Drumcoologan, at last, just as night was closing in. Now, about half-way between the manor-house of Tubbermore and the village of Drumcoologan, the road has been so much injured by the passage of a mountain-torrent, that when the travellers passed in the morning they found themselves obliged to descend from the carriage and proceed for some distance on foot; a precaution that Mr. Kennyfeck was compelled also to take on his return, ordering the servant to wait for him on the crest of the hill. That spot he was never destined to reach! The groom waited long and anxiously for his coming; he could not leave his horses to go back and find out the reasons of his delay—he was alone; the distance to Tubbermore was too great to permit of his proceeding thither to give the alarm; he waited, therefore, with that anxiety which the sad condition of our country is but too often calculated to inspire even among the most courageous: when, at last, footsteps were heard approaching—he called out aloud his master's name—but, instead of hearing the well-known voice in answer, he was accosted in Irish by an old man, who told him, in the forcible accents of his native tongue, 'that a murdered man was lying on the roadside.' The groom at once hurried back, and at the foot of the ascent discovered the lifeless but still warm body of his master; a bullet-wound was found in the back of the skull, and the marks of some severe blows across the face. On investigating further, at a little distance off, a pistol was picked up from a small drain, where it seemed to have been thrown in haste; the bore corresponded exactly with the bullet taken from the body; but more important still, this pistol appears to be the fellow of another belonging to Mr. Cashel, and will be identified by a competent witness as having been his property.

"An interval now occurs, in which a cloud of mystery intervenes; and we are unable to follow the steps of the prisoner, of whom nothing is known, till, on the alarm of the murder reaching Tubbermore, a rumour runs that footsteps have been heard in Mr. Cashel's apartment, the key of which the owner had taken with him. The report gains currency rapidly that it is Mr. Cashel himself; and although

the servants aver that he never could have traversed the hall and the staircase unseen by some of them, a new discovery appears to explain the fact. It is this. The ivy which grew on the wall of the house, and which reached to the window of Mr. Cashel's dressing-room, is found torn down, and indicating the passage of some one by its branches. On the discovery of this most important circumstance, the Chief Justice, accompanied by several other gentlemen, proceeded in a body to the chamber, and demanded admittance. From them you will hear in detail what took place—the disorder in which they found the apartment—heaps of papers littered the floor—letters lay in charred masses upon the hearth—the glass of the window was broken, and the marks of feet upon the window-sill and the floor showed that some one had entered by that means. Lastly—and to this fact you will give your utmost attention—the prisoner himself is found with his clothes torn in several places; marks of blood are seen upon them, and his wrist shows a recent wound, from which the blood flows profusely. Although cautioned by the wise foresight of the learned judge against any rash attempt at explanation, or any inadvertent admission which might act to his prejudice hereafter, he bursts forth into a violent invective upon the murderer, and suggests that they should mount their horses at once, and scour the country in search of him. This counsel being, for obvious reasons, rejected, and his plan of escape frustrated, he falls into a moody despondency, and will not speak. Shrouding himself in an affected misanthropy, he pretends to believe that he is the victim of some deep-planned treachery—that all these circumstances, whose detail I have given you, have been the deliberate schemes of his enemies. It is difficult to accept of this explanation, Gentlemen of the Jury; and, although I would be far from diminishing in the slightest the grounds of any valid defence a man so situated may take up, I would caution you against any rash credulity of vague and unsupported assertions; or, at least, to weigh them well against the statements of truth-telling witnesses. The prisoner is bound to lay before you a narrative of that day, from the hour of his leaving home, to that of his return; —to explain why he separated from his companion, and came back alone by a path he had never travelled before, and at night;—with what object he entered his own house by the window—a feat of considerable difficulty and of some danger. His disordered and blood-stained dress—his wounded hand—the missing pistol—the agitation of his manner when discovered amid the charred and torn remains of letters—all these have to be accounted for. And remember at what a moment they occurred! When his house was the scene of festivity and rejoicing—when above a thousand guests were abandoning themselves to the unbridled enjoyment of pleasure—this is the time the host takes to arrange papers, to destroy letters—to make, in fact,

those hurried arrangements that men are driven to on the eve of either flight or some desperate undertaking. Bear all this in mind, Gentlemen; and remember that, to explain these circumstances, the narrative of the prisoner must be full, coherent, and consistent in all its parts. The Courts of Justice admit of neither reservations nor mysteries. We are here to investigate the truth, whose cause admits of no compromise."

The witnesses for the prosecution were now called over and sworn. The first examined were some of the servants who had overheard the conversation between Cashel and Kennyfeck on the morning of leaving Tubbermore. They differed slightly as to the exact expressions used, but agreed perfectly as to their general import: a fact which even the cross-examination of Mr. Jones only served to strengthen. Some peasants of Drumcoologan were next examined, to show that during the day slight differences were constantly occurring between the parties, and that Cashel had more than once made use of the expression, "Have your own way *now*, but ere long I'll take mine;" or words very similar.

The old man who discovered the body, and the postilion, were then questioned as to all the details of the place, the hour, and the fact; and then Tom Keane was called for. It was by him the pistol was picked up from the drain. The air of reluctance with which the witness ascended the table, and the look of affectionate interest he bestowed upon the dock, were remarked by the whole assemblage. If the countenance of the man evinced little of frankness or candour, the stealthy glance he threw around him as he took his seat showed that he was not deficient in cunning.

As his examination proceeded, the dogged reluctance of his answers, the rugged bluntness by which he avoided any clear explanation of his meaning, were severely commented on by the Attorney-General, and even called forth the dignified censure of the Bench; so that the impression produced by his evidence was, that he was endeavouring throughout to screen his landlord from the imputation of a well-merited guilt.

The cross-examination now opened, but without in any way serving to shake the material character of the testimony, at the same time that it placed in a still stronger light the attachment of the witness to the prisoner. Cashel, hitherto inattentive and indifferent to all that was going forward, became deeply interested as this examination proceeded; his features, apathetic and heavy before, grew animated and eager, and he leaned forward to hear the witness with every sign of anxiety.

The spectators who thronged the Court attributed the prisoner's eagerness to the important nature of the testimony, and the close reference it bore to the manner of the crime; they little knew the simple

truth, that it was the semblance of affection for him—the pretended interest in his fate—which touched his lonely heart, and kindled there a love of life.

"That poor peasant, then," said Roland to himself, "he, at least, deems me guiltless. I did not think that there lived one who cared as much for me!"

With the apparent intention of showing to the Court and Jury that Keane was not biased towards his former master, Mr. Jones addressed several questions to him; but instead of eliciting the fact, they called forth from the witness a burst of gratitude and love for him that actually shook the building by the applause it excited, and called for the interference of the Bench to repress.

"You may go down, Sir," said Jones, with the fretful impatience of a man worsted in a controversy; and the witness descended from the table amid the scarcely suppressed plaudits of the crowd. As he passed the dock, Cashel leaned forward and extended his hand towards him. The fellow drew back, and they who were next him perceived that a sallow sickly colour spread itself over his face, and that his lips became bloodless.

"Give me your hand, man!" said Cashel.

"Oh, Mr. Cashel! oh, Sir!" said he, with that whining affectation of modesty the peasant can so easily assume.

"Give me your hand, I say," said Cashel, firmly. "Its honest grasp will make me think better of the world than I have done for many a day."

The fellow made the effort, but with such signs of inward terror and trepidation that he seemed like one ready to faint; and when his cold and nerveless hand quitted Cashel's, it fell powerless to his side. He moved now quickly forward, and was soon lost to sight in the dense throng.

The next witnesses examined were the group who, headed by the Chief Justice, had entered Cashel's room. If they all spoke guardedly, and with great reserve, as to the manner of the prisoner, and the construction they would feel disposed to put upon the mode in which he received them, they agreed as to every detail and every word spoken with an accuracy that profoundly impressed the Jury.

The magistrate, Mr. Goring, as having taken the most active part in the proceedings, was subjected to a long and searching cross-examination by Jones; who appeared to imply that some private source of dislike to Cashel had been the animating cause of his zeal in this instance.

Although not a single fact arose to give a shade of colour to this suspicion, the lawyer clang to it with the peculiar pertinacity that often establishes by persistence when it fails in proof; and so pointedly and directly at last, that the learned Judge felt bound to

interfere, and observe, that nothing in the testimony of the respected witness could lay any ground for the insinuation thrown out by the counsel.

Upon this there ensued one of those sharp altercations between Bench and Bar which seem the "complement" of every eventful trial in Ireland; and which, after a brief contest, usually leave both the combatants excessively in the wrong.

The present case was no exception to this rule. The Judge was heated and imperious—the Counsel flippant in all the insolence of mock respect—and ended by the stereotyped panegyric on the "glorious sanctity that invests the counsel of a defence in a criminal action—the inviolability of a pledge which no member of the bar could suffer to be sullied in his person"—and a great many similar fine things, which, if not "briefed" by the attorney, are generally paid for by the client! The skrimmage ended, as it ever does, by a salute of honour; in which each, while averring that he was incontestably right, bore testimony to the conscientious scruples and delicate motives of the other; and at last they bethought them of the business for which they were there, and of him whose fate for life or death was on the issue. The examination of Mr. Goring was renewed.

"You have told us, Sir," said Jones, "that immediately after the terrible tidings had reached Tubbermore of Mr. Kennyfeck's death, suspicion seemed at once to turn on Mr. Cashel. Will you explain this, or at least let us hear how you can account for a circumstance so strange?"

"I did not say as much as you have inferred," replied Goring. "I merely observed that Mr. Cashel's name became most singularly mixed up with the event, and rumours of a difference between him and his agent were buzzed about."

"Might not this mention of Mr. Cashel's name have proceeded from an anxious feeling on the part of his friends to know of his safety?"

"It might."

"Are you not certain that it was so?"

"In one instance, certainly. I remember that a gentleman at once drew our attention to the necessity of seeing after him."

"Who was this gentleman?"

"Mr. Linton—a near and intimate friend of Mr. Cashel."

"And he suggested that it would be proper to take steps for Mr. Cashel's safety?"

"He did so."

"Was anything done in consequence of that advice?"

"Nothing, I believe. The state of confusion that prevailed—the terror that pervaded every side—the dreadful scenes enacting around

us, prevented our following up the matter with all the foresight which might be desired."

"And, in fact, you sought relief from the unsettled distraction of your thoughts, by fixing the crime upon some one—even though he should prove, of all assembled there, the least likely?"

"We did not attach anything to Mr. Cashel's disfavour until we discovered that he was in his dressing-room, and in the manner already stated."

"But you certainly jumped to your conclusion by a sudden bound?"

"It would be fairer to say that our thoughts converged to the same impression at the same time."

"Where is this Mr. Linton? Is he among the list of your witnesses, Mr. Attorney?"

"No, we have not called him."

"I thought as much!" said Jones, sneeringly; "and yet the omission is singular, of one whose name is so frequently mixed up in these proceedings. He might prove an inconvenient witness."

A slight murmur here ran through the Court; and a gentleman, advancing to the bar, whispered some words to the Attorney-General, who, rising, said:

"My Lord, I am just this instant informed that Mr. Linton is dangerously ill of fever at his house near Dublin. My informant adds, that no hopes are entertained of his recovery."

"Was he indisposed at the period in which my learned friend drew up this case? or was there any intention of summoning him here for examination?" asked Jones.

"We did not require Mr. Linton's testimony," replied the Attorney-General.

"It can scarcely be inferred that we feared it," said a junior barrister, "since the first palpable evidences that implicated the prisoner were discovered by Mr. Linton: the wadding of the pistol—part of a letter in Mr. Cashel's own handwriting—and the tracks corresponding with his boots."

"This is all most irregular, my Lord," broke in Jones, eagerly. "Here are statements thrown out in all the loose carelessness of conversation, totally unsupported by evidence. I submit that it is impossible to offer a defence to a cause conducted in this manner."

"You are quite right, Mr. Jones; this is not evidence."

"But this is, my Lord!" said the Attorney-General, in a heated manner; "and for motives of delicacy we might not have used it, if not driven to this course by the insinuations of counsel. Here is a note in pencil, dated from the 'Pass of Ennismore,' and running thus: 'It looks badly; but I fear you have no other course than to

arrest him. In fact, it is too late for anything else. Consult Malone and Meek.' And this can be proved to be in Mr. Linton's handwriting."

Mr. Clare Jones did not speak a word as the note was handed up to the Bench, and then to the Jury-box; he even affected to think it of no importance, and did not deign to examine it for himself.

"You may go down, Mr. Goring," said he, after a slight pause, in which he appeared deliberating what course to follow.

Making his way to the side of the dock, Jones addressed himself to Cashel in a low, cautious voice:

"It now remains with you, Mr. Cashel, to decide whether you will entrust me with the facts on which you ground your innocence, or prefer to see yourself overwhelmed by adverse testimony."

Cashel made no reply, but leaned his head on his hand in deep thought.

"Have you any witnesses to call?" whispered Jones. "Shall we try an *alibi?*"

Cashel did not answer.

"What is your defence, Sir, in one word?" asked Jones, shortly.

"I am not guilty," said Cashel, slowly; "but I do not expect others to believe me so."

"Is your defence to rest upon that bare assertion?" asked the lawyer; but Roland did not seem to heed the question, as, folding his arms, he stood erect in the dock, his attention to all appearance bestowed upon the ceremonial of the Court.

Jones, at once turning to the Bench, expressed his regret that, neither being able, from the shortness of the time, to obtain proper information on the case, nor being honoured by the confidence of the accused, he must decline the task of commenting on the evidence; and would only entreat the Jury to weigh the testimony they had heard with a merciful disposition, and wherever discrepancies and doubts occurred, to give the full benefit of such to the prisoner.

"You have no witnesses to call?" asked the Judge.

"I am told there are none, my Lord," said Jones, with an accent of resignation.

A brief colloquy, in a low voice, ensued between the Crown lawyers and Clare Jones, when, at length, a well-known barrister rose to address the Jury for the prosecution. The gentleman who now claimed the attention of the Court was one who, not possessing either the patient habits of study, or that minute attention to technical detail which constitute the legal mind, was a fluent, easy speaker, with an excellent memory, and a thorough knowledge of the stamp and temperament of the men that usually fill a Jury-box. He was eminently popular with that class, on whom he had often bestowed

all the flatteries of his craft; assuring them that their "order" was the bone and sinew of the land, and that "our proudest boast as a nation was in the untitled nobility of commerce."

His whole address on the present occasion tended to show that the murder of Mr. Kennyfeck was one among the many instances of the unbridled licence and tyranny assumed by the aristocracy over the middle ranks.

Mr. Kennyfeck was no bad subject for such eulogium as he desired to bestow. He was the father of a family—a well-known citizen of Dublin—a grave, white-cravated, pompous man, of respectable exterior, always seen at vestries, and usually heading the lists of public charities. Cashel was the very antithesis to all this: the reckless squanderer of accidentally acquired wealth—the wayward and spoiled child of fortune, with the tastes of a Buccaneer, and the means of a Prince, suddenly thrown into the world of fashion. What a terrible ordeal to a mind so untrained—to a temper so unbridled! and how fearfully had it told upon him! After commenting upon the evidence, and showing in what a continuous chain each event was linked with the other—how consistent were all—how easily explicable every circumstance, he remarked that the whole case had but one solitary difficulty; and although that was one which weighed more in a moral than a legal sense, it required that he should dwell a few moments upon it.

"The criminal law of our land, Gentlemen of the Jury, is satisfied with the facts which establish guilt or innocence, without requiring that the motives of accused parties should be too closely scrutinised. Crime consists, of course, of the spirit in which a guilty action is done; but the law wisely infers that a guilty act is the evidence of a guilty spirit; and therefore, although there may be circumstances to extenuate the criminality of an act, the offence before the law is the same; and the fact, the great fact, that a man has killed his fellow-man, is what constitutes murder.

"I have said that this case has but one difficulty; and that is, the possible motive which could have led to the fatal act. Now, this would present itself as a considerable obstacle if the relations between the parties were such as we happily witness them in every county of this island, where the proprietor and his agent are persons linked, by the sacred obligation of duty, and the frequent intercourse of social life, into the closest friendship.

"That blood should stain the bonds of such brotherhood would be scarcely credible—and even when credible, inexplicable; it would be repugnant to all our senses to conceive an act so unnatural. But was the present a similar case? or rather, was it one exactly the opposite? You have heard that repeated differences occurred between the parties, amounting even to altercations. Mr. Hoare's

evidence has shown you that Mr. Cashel's extravagance had placed him in difficulties of no common kind; his demands for money were incessant, and the utter disregard of the cost of obtaining it is almost beyond belief. The exigence on one side, the manly resistance on the other, must have led to constant misunderstanding. But these were not the only circumstances that contributed to a feeling of estrangement, soon to become something still more perilous. And here I pause to ask myself how far I am warranted in disclosing facts of a private nature, although in their bearing they have an important relation to the case before us! It is a question of great delicacy; and were it not that the eternal interests of Truth and Justice transcend all others, I might shrink from the performance of a task which, considered in a merely personal point of view, is deeply distressing. But it is not of one so humble as myself of whom there is a question here: the issue is, whether a man's blood should be spilled, and no expiation be made for it?"

The counsel after this entered into a discursive kind of narrative of Cashel's intimacy with the Kennyfeck family, with whom he had been for a time domesticated; and after a mass of plausible generalities, wound up by an imputed charge that he had won the affections of the younger daughter, who, with the consent of her parents, was to become his wife.

"It will not seem strange to you, Gentlemen," said he, "that I have not called to that table as a witness either the widow or the orphan to prove these facts, or that I have not subjected their sacred sorrows to the rude assaults of a cross-examination. You will not think the worse of me for this reserve: nor shall I ask of you to give my statements the value of sworn evidence: you will hear them, and decide what value they possess in leading you to a true understanding of this case.

"I have said, that if a regular pledge and promise of marriage did not bind the parties, something which is considered equivalent among persons of honour did exist, and that by their mutual acquaintances they were regarded as contracted to each other. Mr. Cashel made her splendid and expensive presents, which had never been accepted save for the relations between them; he distinguished her on all occasions by exclusive attention, and among his friends he spoke of his approaching marriage as a matter fixed and determined on. In this state of things a discovery took place, which at once served to display the character of the young gentleman, and to rescue the family from one of the very deepest, because one of the most irremediable, of all calamities. Information reached them, accompanied by such circumstances as left no doubt of its veracity, that this Mr. Cashel had been married already, and that his wife, a young Spanish lady, was still alive, and residing at the Havannah.

"I leave you to imagine the misery which this sad announcement produced in that circle, where, until he entered it, happiness had never been disturbed. It is not necessary that I should dwell upon the distress this cruel treachery produced: with its consequences alone we have any concern here; and these were a gradual estrangement—a refusal, calm but firm, to receive Mr. Cashel as before; an intimation that they knew of circumstances which, from delicacy to him, they would never advert to openly, but which must at once bar all the contemplated relations: and, to this sad, humiliating alternative he submitted!

"To avoid the slanderous stories which gossip would be certain to put in circulation, they did not decline the invitation they had before accepted to visit Tubbermore: they came, however, under the express stipulation that no close intimacy was ever to be resumed between Mr. Cashel and themselves; he was not even to use the common privilege of a host—to visit them in their own apartments. That this degree of cold distance was maintained between them, on every occasion, all the guests assembled at the house can testify; and he neither joined their party in carriage nor on horseback. Perhaps, this interdiction was carried out with too rigid a discipline; perhaps, the cold reserve they maintained had assumed a character of insult, to one whose blood still glowed with the fire of southern associations; perhaps, some circumstance with which we are unacquainted contributed to render this estrangement significant, and consequently painful to a man who could not brook the semblance of a check. It is needless to ask how or whence originating, since we can see in the fact itself cause sufficient for indignant reproof on one side, for a wounded self-love and tarnished honour on the other.

"Are we at a loss for such motives, then, in the presence of facts like these? Ask yourselves, Is a man, bred and trained up in all the riotous freedom of a service scarcely above the rank of piracy—accustomed to the lawless licence of a land where each makes the law with his own right hand—is such a man one to bear a slight with patient submission, or to submit to an open shame in tame obedience? Can you not easily imagine how all the petty differences of opinion they might have had were merely skirmishes in front of that line where deeper and graver feelings stood in battle array? Can you suppose that, however ruled over by the ordinary courtesies of life, this youth nourished his plans of ultimate revenge, not only upon those who refused with indignation his traitorous alliance, but who were the depositary of a secret that must interdict all views of marriage in any other quarter?"

CHAPTER XXIX.

Equal to either fortune.—Eugene Aram.

As the Crown Counsel sat down, a low murmur ran through the Court, whose meaning it would be difficult to define; for, if the greater number present were carried away by the indignant eloquence of the pleader to believe Cashel a hardened criminal, some few still seemed to cling to his side, and bent their eyes towards the dock with looks of sympathy and comfort. And oh! how little know they, whose eyes are beaming with the bright spark that warms their generous hearts, what loadstars are they to him who stands alone, forsaken, and accused in the criminal dock! What a resting-place does the weary and tired soul feel that glance of kindly meaning! How does it speak to his bruised and wounded spirit of hope and charity! What energy will it impart to the fast-failing courage! what self-respect and self-reliance to him who, a few moments back, was sinking beneath the abasement of despair!

Such was the effect now produced upon Roland Cashel. The array of circumstances, so formidably marshalled by his accuser, had completely overwhelmed him; the consciousness of innocence failed to support him against the feeling which he saw spreading like a mist around him. Against the accusation—against its fearful penalty—his own stout heart could sustain him; but how bear up against the contempt and the abhorrence of his fellow-men! Under the crushing weight of this shame he was sinking fast, when a stray glance—a chance expression of interest, like sunlight piercing a dark cloud—gave promise that all was not lost. He felt that there were yet some who wished to believe him guiltless, and that all sympathy for him had not yet died out.

"Does the prisoner desire to avail himself of the privilege he possesses to call witnesses to character?" asked the Judge.

"No, my Lord," said Cashel, firmly, but respectfully. "Since my accession to fortune, my life has been passed for the most part in what is called the 'fashionable world;' and, from what I have seen of it, the society does not seem rich in those persons whose commendations, were they to give them, would weigh heavily with your Lordship. Besides, they could say little to my praise, which the learned counsel has not already said to my disparagement—that I had the command of wealth, and squandered it without taste and without credit."

Few and insignificant as were these words, the easy and fearless mode of their delivery, the manly energy of him who spoke them, seemed to produce a most favourable impression throughout the Court, which as rapidly reacted upon Cashel; for now the embers of hope were fanned, and already glowed into a slight flicker.

"The prisoner having waived his privilege, my Lord," said the Attorney-General, "I beg to observe that the case is now closed."

"Is it too late, then, my Lord, for me to address a few words to the Jury?" asked Roland, calmly.

"What say you, Mr. Attorney-General?" asked the Judge.

"Your Lordship knows far better than I, that to address the Court at this stage of the proceedings, would be to concede the right of reply—and, in fact, of speaking twice; since the prisoner's not having availed himself of the fitting occasion to comment on the evidence, gives him not the slightest pretension to usurp another one."

"Such is the law of the case," said the Judge, solemnly.

"I have nothing to observe against it, my Lord," said Cashel. "If I have not availed myself of the privilege accorded to men placed as I am, I must only submit to the penalty my pride has brought upon me—for it was pride, my Lord. Since that, however, another, and I hope a higher pride has animated me, to vindicate my character and my fame; so that, at some future day—a long future it may be—when the true facts of this dark mystery shall be brought to light, a more cautious spirit will pervade men's minds as to the guilt of him assailed by circumstantial evidence. It might be, my Lord, that all I could adduce in my own behalf would weigh little against the weight of accusations, which even to myself appear terribly consistent. I know, for I feel, how hard it would be to accept the cold unsupported narrative of a prisoner, in which many passages might occur of doubtful probability, some of even less credit, and some again of an obscurity to which even he himself could not afford the clue; and yet, with all these difficulties, enhanced tenfold by my little knowledge of the forms of a Court, and my slender capacity, I regret, my Lord, that I am unable to address the few words I had intended to the Jury—less, believe me, to avert the shipwreck that awaits myself, than to be a beacon to some other who may be as solitary and unfriended as I am."

These words, delivered with much feeling, but in a spirit of calm determination, seemed to thrill through the entire assemblage; and even the senior Judge stopped to confer for some minutes with his brother on the bench, in evident hesitation what course to adopt. At length he said,

"However we may regret the course you have followed in thus depriving yourself of that legitimate defence the constitution of our country provides, we see no sufficient reason to deviate from the

common order of proceeding in like cases. I will now, therefore, address the Jury, who have already heard your words, and will accord them any consideration they may merit."

"It may be, my Lord," said Cashel, "that evidence so strongly imbued with probability may induce the gentlemen in that box to believe me guilty; in which case, I understand, your Lordship would address to me the formal question, 'If I had anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon me.' Now, if I am rightly informed, any observations of a prisoner at such a moment are regarded rather in the light of petitions for mercy, than as explanations or corrections of falsehood. I have, therefore, only now to say, that, whatever decision you may come to, the Court shall not be troubled further with interference of mine."

The Judge bowed slightly, as if in reply to this, and began his charge; but the Foreman of the Jury, leaning forward, said that his fellow-jurors had desired him to ask, as a favour to themselves, that the prisoner might be heard. A short conference ensued between the Bench and the Crown Counsel, which ended by the permission being accorded; and now Cashel rose to address the Court.

"I will not," said he, "abuse the time of this Court by any irrelevant matter, nor will I advert to a single circumstance foreign to the substance of the charge against me. I purpose simply to give a narrative of the last day I passed with my poor friend, and to leave on record this detail as the solemn protestation of innocence of one who has too little to live for to fear death."

With this brief preface he began a regular history of that eventful day, from the hour he had started from Tubbermore in company with Mr. Kennyfeck.

The reader is already familiar with every step and circumstance of that period, so that it is not necessary we should weary him by any recapitulation; enough if we say that Cashel proceeded, with a minuteness devoid of all prolixity, to mention each fact as it occurred, commenting as he went on upon the evidence already given, and explaining its import without impugning its truth. Juries are ever disposed to listen favourably to a speaker who brings to his aid no other allies than candour and frankness, and who, without pretensions to legal acuteness, narrates facts with clear and distinctive precision. Leaving him, therefore, still speaking, and by the irresistible force of truth gradually winning upon his hearers, let us quit the Court for a brief time, and passing through the crowded space before the doors, traverse the town, densely thronged by curious and eager visitors. We do not mean to linger with them, nor overhear the comments they passed upon the eventful scene beside them: our business is about a mile off, at a small public-house at a short distance from the roadside, usually frequented by cattle-dealers and the

customers at the weekly markets. Here, in a meanly-furnished room, where, for it was now evening, a common dip candle shed its lugubrious yellow light upon the rude appliances of vulgar life, sat a man, whose eager expectancy was marked in every line of his figure. Every now and then he would arise from his chair, and, screening the candle from the wind, open the window to look out.

The night was dark and gusty: drifting rain beat at intervals against the glass, and seemed the forerunner of a greater storm. The individual we have spoken of did not seem to care for, if he even noticed, the inclemency; he brushed the wet from his bushy beard and moustaches with indifference, and bent his ear to listen to the sounds upon the road in deepest earnestness. At last the sound of horses' feet and wheels was heard rapidly approaching, and a car drove up to the door, from which a man, wrapped up in a loose frieze coat, descended, and quickly mounted the stairs. As he reached the landing, the door of the room was thrown wide, and the other man, in a low, but distinct voice, said, "Well, what news?"

"All right," said he of the frieze coat, as, throwing off the wet garment, he discovered the person of Mr. Clare Jones. "Nothing could possibly go better; my cross-examination clinched Keane's evidence completely, and no Jury could get over it."

"I almost wish you had let him alone," said the other, gruffly, and in evident discontent; "I foresee that the sympathy the scoundrel affected will be troublesome to us yet."

"I have no fears on that head," replied the other, confidently. "The facts are there, and Crankle's speech to evidence ripped him up in a terrific manner."

"Did he allude to the Spanish girl?"

"He did, and with great effect."

"And the Kilgoff affair—did he bring 'My Lady' up for judgment?"

"No. The Attorney-General positively forbade all allusion to that business."

"Oh, indeed!" said the other, with a savage sneer, "'The Court' was too sacred for such profanation."

"I think he was right, too," said Jones. "The statement could never have been brought to bear upon the case before the Court. It would have been a mere episode outside of the general history, and just as likely impress the Jury with the opinion that all the charges were trumped up to gain a conviction in any way."

The other paused, and seemed to reflect for some minutes, when he said, "Well, and what are they at now?"

"When I left, the Court had just refused Cashel's demand to address the Jury. The Chief Baron had ruled against him, and, of

course, the charge is now being pronounced. As I knew how this must run, I took the opportunity of coming over here to see you."

"*My* name was but once mentioned, you tell me," said the other, in an abrupt manner.

"It was stated that you were dangerously ill, without hope of recovery," said Jones, faltering, and with evident awkwardness.

"And not alluded to again?" asked the other, whom there is no need of calling Mr. Linton.

"Yes, once—passingly," said Jones, still faltering.

"How do you mean, passingly?" asked Linton, in anger.

"The Crown Lawyers brought forward that note of yours from Ennismore."

Linton dashed his closed fist against the table, and uttered a horrible and blasphemous oath.

"Some bungling of yours, I'll be sworn, brought this about," said he, savagely; "some piece of that adroit chicanery that always recoils upon its projector."

"I'll not endure this language, Sir," said Jones. "I have done more to serve you than any man would have stooped to in my profession. Unsay these words."

"I do unsay them—I ask pardon for them, my dear Jones. I never meant them seriously," said Linton, in that fawning tone he could so well assume. "You ought to know me better than to think that *I*, who have sworn solemnly to make your fortune, could entertain such an opinion of you. Tell me now of this. Did Cashel say anything as the note was read?"

"Not a syllable."

"How did he look?"

"He smiled slightly."

"Ah, he smiled!" said Linton, growing pale; "he smiled! He can do that when he is most determined."

"What avails all his determination now? No narrative of his can shake the testimony which the cross-examination has confirmed. It was a master-stroke of yours, Mr. Linton, to think of supplying him with counsel."

Linton smiled superciliously, as though he was accustomed to higher flights of treachery than this. "So then," said he, at length, "you say the case is strong against him?"

"It could scarcely be stronger?"

"And the feeling—how is the feeling of the Court?"

"Variable, I should say; in the galleries, and among the fashionably-dressed part of the assemblage, inclined somewhat in his favour."

"How? Did not the charge of attempted bigamy tell against him with his fair allies?"

"Not so much as I had hoped."

"What creatures women are!" said Linton, holding up his hands. "And how are they betting? What says Frobisher?"

"He affects to think it no case for odds; he says there's a little fellow in the Jury-box never was known to say 'Guilty.'"

"A scheme to win money—a stale trick, my Lord Charles!" muttered Linton, contemptuously, "but I've no objection to hedge a little, for all that."

"I must be going," said Jones, looking at his watch; "the charge will soon be over, and I must look to the proceedings."

"Will they be long in deliberation, think you?" asked Linton.

"I suspect not; they are all weary and tired. It is now ten o'clock."

"I thought it later," said Linton, thoughtfully; "time lags heavily with him whose mind is in expectancy. Hark! there is some one below talking of the trial!" He opened the door to listen. "What says he?"

"He speaks of Cashel as still addressing the Court. Can they have consented to hear him after all?"

A fearful curse broke from Linton, and he closed the door noiselessly.

"See to this, Jones; see to it speedily. My mind misgives me that something will go wrong."

"You say that you know him thoroughly, and that he never would——"

"No, no," broke in Linton, passionately; "he'll not break one tittle of his word, even to save his life! When he promised me that all should be secret between us, he made no reservations, and you'll see that he'll not avail himself of such privileges now. I do know him thoroughly."

"Then what, or whence, is your fear?"

Linton made no other answer than a gesture of his hand, implying some vague and indistinct dread. "But go," said he, "and go quickly. You ought never to have left the Court. Had you remained, perhaps this might have been prevented. If all goes right, you'll be here by daybreak at furthest, and Keane along with you. Take care of that, Jones; don't lose sight of him. If—if—we are unfortunate——and do you think such possible?"

"Everything is possible with a Jury."

"True," said he, thoughtfully; "it is an issue we should never have left it to. But away; hasten back. Great Heaven! only to think how much hangs upon the next half-hour!"

"To Cashel, you mean?" said Jones, as he prepared himself for the road.

"No; I mean to *me*. I *do* know him thoroughly; and well I know

the earth would be too narrow to live upon, were that man once more free and at liberty."

In his eagerness for Jones's departure, he almost pushed him from the room; and then, when he had closed and locked the door again, he sat down beside the low flickering fire, and as the fitful light played upon his features, all the appliances of disguise he wore could not hide the terrible ravages that long corroding anxiety had made in him. Far more did he resemble the arraigned criminal than he who now stood in the dock, and with a cheek blanched only by imprisonment, waited calm, collected, and erect—"Equal to either fortune."

Linton had often felt all the terrible suspense which makes the Paradise or the Hell of the gambler: he had known what it was to have his whole fortune on the issue, at a moment when the rushing mob of horsemen and foot concealed the winning horse from view, and mingled in their mad cheers the names of those whose victory had been his ruin and disgrace. He had watched the rolling die, on whose surface, as it turned, all he owned in the world was staked; he had sat gazing on the unturned card, on which his destiny was already written;—and yet all these moments of agonising suspense were as nothing compared to that he now suffered, as he sat with bent-down head trying to catch the sounds which from time to time the wind bore along from the town.

As if to feed his mind with hope, he would recapitulate to himself all the weighty and damnatory details which environed Cashel, and which, by their singular consistency and coherence, seemed irrefutable. He would even reckon them upon his fingers, as "so many chances against him." He would try to imagine himself one of the Jury, listening to the evidence and the charge; and asked himself "were it possible to reject such proofs?" He pictured to his mind Cashel addressing the Court with all that rash and impetuous eloquence so characteristic of him, and which, to more trained and sober tempers, would indicate a nature little subject to the cold discipline of restraint; and from all these speculative dreams he would start suddenly up, to lean out of the window and listen. Other thoughts, too, would cross his mind, scarcely less distracting. What would become of himself should Cashel escape? Whither should he retire? If, at one moment, he half resolved to "stand his ground" in the world, and trust to his consummate skill in secret calumny to ruin him, another reflection showed that Cashel would not play out the game on these conditions. A duel, in which one at least must fall, would be inevitable; and although this was an ordeal he had braved oftener than most men, he had no courage to dare it now. Through all this tangled web of harassing hope and fear, regrets deep and poignant entered, that he had not worked his ruin by slower and safer steps. "I might have been both Judge and Jury—ay, and Executioner too,"

muttered he, "had I been patient." And here he gave a low, sardonic laugh. "When the hour of confiscation came, I might have played the Crown's part also." But so is it: there is no halting in the downward course of wickedness; the very pleadings of self-interest cannot save men from the commission of *Crimes*, by which they are to hide *Follies*.

The slow hours of the night dragged heavily on; the fire had gone out, and the candle too—unnoticed, and Linton sat in the dark, brooding over his gloomy thoughts. At one moment he would start up, and wonder if the whole were not a terrible dream—the nightmare of his own imagination; and it was only after an effort he remembered where he was, and with what object. He could not see his watch to tell the hour, but he knew it must be late, since the fire had long since died out, and the room was cold and chill. The agony of expectation became at last too great to endure; he felt his way to the door and passed out, and groping down the narrow stair, reached the outer door, and the road.

All was dark and lonely; not a sound of horseman or foot-traveller broke the dreary stillness of the hour, as Linton, urged on by an impulse he could not restrain, took his way towards the town. The distance was scarcely above a mile, but his progress was slow, for the road was wet and slippery, and the darkness very great. At last he reached the long straggling suburb, with its interminable streets of wretched hovels; but even here none were yet astir, and not a light was seen to glimmer. To this succeeded the narrow streets of the town itself—where, at long intervals, a dusky yellow haze glimmered by way of lamplight. Stopping beneath one of these, Linton examined his watch, and found that it was near five o'clock. The lateness of the hour, and the unbroken stillness on every side, half induced him to believe that "all was over," and Cashel's fate sealed for good or evil; but then Jones would have hastened back to bring the tidings! There could not be a doubt on this head. Urged onward to greater speed by emotions which now were scarcely supportable, he traversed street after street in frantic haste; when suddenly, on turning a corner, he came in front of a large building, from whose windows, dimmed by steam, a great blaze of light issued, and fell in long columns upon the "Square" in front. A dense, dark mass of human figures crowded the wide doorway, but they were silent and motionless all. Within the Court, too, the stillness was unbroken; for as Linton listened he could now hear a cough, which resounded through the building.

"The Jury are in deliberation," thought he, and sat down upon the step of a door, his eyes riveted upon the Court-house, and his heart beating so that he could count its strokes. Not far from him, as he sat there, scarcely a hundred paces off, within the building,

there sat another man, waiting with a high throbbing heart for that word to be uttered, which should either open the door of his prison, or close that of the grave upon him for ever. The moments of expectancy were terrible to both! they were life-long agonies distilled to seconds; and he who could live through their pains must come forth from the trial a changed man for ever after.

CHAPTER XXX.

Free to go forth once more, but oh!
How changed! HAROLD.

A SLIGHT movement in the crowd near the door—a kind of waving motion like the quiet surging of the sea—seemed to indicate some commotion within the Court; and although Linton saw this, and judged it rightly as the evidence of something eventful about to happen, he sat still to await the result with the dogged firmness with which he would have awaited death itself.

As we are less interested spectators of the scene, let us press our way through the tired and exhausted crowd that fill the body of the building. And now we stand beneath the gallery, and immediately behind a group of about half a dozen, whose dress and demeanour at once proclaim them of the world of fashion. These are Lord Charles Frobisher and his friends, who, with memorandum-books and time-pieces before them, sit in eager anxiety, for they have wagers on everything: on the verdict—how the Judge will charge—if the prisoner will confess—if he will attempt a defence; and even the length of time the Jury will sit in deliberation, is the subject of a bet!

This anxiety was now at its climax, for, directly in front of them, a small door had just opened, and a crowd of men entered, and took their seats in the gallery.

Their grave countenances, marked by watching and eager discussion, at once proclaimed that they were the Jury.

There was a low murmur heard throughout the Court as they took their seats; and instinctively many an eye was turned towards the dock, to watch how *he* bore himself in that trying moment. With a steady gaze fixed upon the spot from which his doom was to be spoken, he stood erect, with arms folded and his head high. He was deathly pale; but not a trace of anything like fear in the calm lineaments of his manly features.

"The Jury seem very grave," whispered Upton to Frobisher.

"I wish that stupid old Judge would bestir himself," replied Lord Charles, looking at his watch; "it wants four minutes to five: he'll scarcely be in Court before it strikes, and I shall lose a pony through it."

"Here he comes!—here he comes!" said another; and the Chief Baron entered the Court, his face betraying that he had been aroused from sleep.

"Are you agreed, Gentlemen of the Jury?" asked the Judge, in a low voice.

"Not perfectly, my Lord," said the Foreman. "We want your Lordship to decide a point for us; which is—If we should be of opinion that any grave provocation led to the death of Kennyfeck, whether our verdict could be modified, and our finding be, in consequence, for manslaughter, and not murder?"

"The indictment," said the Judge, "does not give you that option. It is framed without any count for the minor offence. I ought, perhaps, also to observe, that nothing has transpired in the evidence given here, this day, to warrant the impression you seem inclined to entertain. Your verdict must be one of Guilty or Not Guilty."

"We are of opinion, my Lord," said a Juryman, "that great latitude in the expression of temper should be conceded to a young man reared and educated as the prisoner has been."

"These sentiments, honourable to you as they are, cannot be indulged at the expense of justice, however they may find a fitting place in a recommendation to mercy; and even this must be accompanied by something more than sympathies."

"Well said, old boy!" muttered Frobisher to himself. "My odds are looking up again."

"In that case, my Lord, we must retire again," said the Foreman; and the Jury once more quitted the Court, whose occupants at once resumed all the lounging attitudes from which the late scene had aroused them. Exhaustion, indeed, had overcome all save the prisoner himself, who paced the narrow limits of the dock with slow and noiseless steps, raising his head at intervals, to watch the gallery where the Jury were to appear.

In less than half an hour the creaking of a door awoke the drowsy Court, and the Jury were seen re-entering the box. They continued to talk among each other as they took their seats, and seemed like men still under the influence of warm discussion.

"Not agreed!" muttered Frobisher, looking at his book. "I stand to win, even on that."

To the formal question of the Court, the Foreman for an instant made no reply, for he was still in eager conversation with another Juror.

"How say you, Gentlemen of the Jury? Are you agreed?"

"We are, my Lord," said the Foreman; "that is to say, some of the Jury have conceded to the rest for the sake of a verdict."

"This does not seem to me like agreement," interposed the Judge. "If you be not of the same mind, it will be your duty to retire once more, and strive by the use of argument and reason to bring the minority to your opinion; or in failure of such result, to avow that you are not like-minded."

"We have done all that is possible in that respect, my Lord; and we beg you will receive our verdict."

"If it be your verdict, Gentlemen," said the Judge, "I desire nothing more."

"We say, Not Guilty, my Lord," said the Foreman.

There was a solemn pause followed the words, and then a low murmur arose, which gradually swelled till it burst forth into a very clamour, that only the grave rebuke of the Bench reduced to the wonted decorum of a Court of Justice.

"I am never disposed, Gentlemen of the Jury, to infringe upon the sacred prerogative which environs your office. You are responsible to God and your own consciences for the words you have uttered here, this day; but my duty requires that I should be satisfied that you have come to your conclusion by a due understanding of the facts laid before you in evidence, by just and natural inferences from those facts, and by weighing well and dispassionately all that you have heard, here, to the utter exclusion of anything you may have listened to outside of this Court. Is your verdict in accordance with these conditions?"

"So far, my Lord, as the mysterious circumstances of this crime admit, I believe it is. We say 'Not Guilty,' from a firm conviction on our minds that we are saying the truth."

"Enough," said the Judge. "Clerk, record the Verdict." Then turning to the dock, towards which every eye was now bent, he continued: "Roland Cashel, a jury of your countrymen, solemnly sworn to try you on the charge of murder, have this day pronounced you 'Not Guilty.' You go, therefore, free from this dock, to resume that station you occupied in society, without stain upon your character or blemish upon your fame. The sworn verdict we have recorded obliterates the accusation. But, for the sake of justice, for the interests of the glorious prerogative we possess in Trial by Jury, for the sacred cause of Truth itself, I implore you, before quitting this Court, to unravel the thread of this dark mystery, so far as in you lies—to fill up those blanks in the narrative you have already given us—to confirm, to the extent in your power, the justice of that sentence by which you are restored once more to the society of your friends and family. This, I say, is now your duty; and the example you will give, in performing it, will reflect credit upon yourself, and do service to

the cause of truth, when you, and I, and those around us, shall be no more."

It was with stronger show of emotion than Cashel had yet displayed that he leaned over the dock, and said:

"My Lord, when life, and something more than life, were in peril, I deemed it right to reserve certain details from the notoriety of this Court. I did so, not to involve any other in the suspicion of this guilt, whose author I know not. I did not do so from any caprice, still less from that misanthropic affectation the Counsel was ungenerous enough to ascribe to me. I believe that I had good and sufficient reasons for the course I adopted. I still think I have such. As to the rest, the discovery of this guilt is now become the duty of my life—I owe it to those whose words have set me free, and I pledge myself to the duty."

The Bench now conferred with the Crown Lawyers as to the proceedings necessary for the discharge of the prisoner; and already the crowds, wearied and exhausted, began to withdraw. The interest of the scene was over; and in the various expressions of those that passed might be read the feelings with which they regarded the result. Many reprobated the verdict as against law and all the facts; some attributed the "finding" to the force of caprice; others even hinted the baser motive, that they didn't like "to hang a man who spent his income at home;" and others, again, surmised that bribery might have had "something to do with it." Few believed in Cashel's innocence of the crime; and even they said nothing, for their convictions were more those of impulse than reason.

"Who could have thought it!" muttered Upton, as, with a knot of others, he stood waiting for the crowd to pass out.

Frobisher shrugged his shoulders, and went on totting a line of figures in his memorandum-book.

"Better off than I thought!" said he to himself; "seven to five taken that he would not plead—eight to three, that he would not call Linton. Long odds upon time won: lost by verdict four hundred and fifty. Well, it might have been worse; and I've got a lesson—never to trust a Jury."

"I say, Charley," whispered Upton, "what are you going to do?"

"How do you mean?"

"Will you go up and speak to him?" said he, with a motion of his head towards the dock.

Frobisher's sallow cheek grew scarlet. Lost and dead to every sense of honourable feeling for many a day, the well had not altogether dried up, and it was with a look of cutting insolence he said:

"No, Sir; if I did not stand by him before, I'll not be the hound to crawl to his feet now."

"By Jove! I don't see the thing in that light. He's all right

now, and there's no reason why we shouldn't know him as we used to do."

"Are you so certain that he will know *you?*" was Frobisher's sharp reply as he turned away.

The vast moving throng pressed forward, and now all were speedily commingled—spectators, lawyers, jurors, witnesses. The spectacle was over, and the empty Court stood silent and noiseless, where a few moments back human hopes and passions had surged like the waves of a sea.

The great space in front of the Court-house, filled for a few moments by the departing crowd, grew speedily silent and empty—for day had not yet broken, and all were hastening homeward to seek repose. One figure alone was seen to stand in that spot, and then move slowly, and to all seeming irresolutely, onward. It was Cashel himself, who, undecided whither to turn, walked listlessly and carelessly on.

As he turned the corner of a street, a jaunting-car, around which some travellers stood, stopped the way, and he heard the words of the driver:

"There's another place to spare."

"Where for?" asked Cashel.

"Limerick, Sir," said the man.

"Drive on, b——t you!" cried a deep voice from the other side of the vehicle; and the fellow's whip descended with a heavy slash, and the beast struck out into a gallop, and speedily was out of sight.

"Didn't you see who it was?" muttered the speaker to the man beside him.

"No."

"It was Cashel himself—I knew him at once; and I tell you, Jones, he would have known *me*, too, for all this disguise, when a gleam of day came to shine."

As for Cashel, he stood gazing after the departing vehicle, with a strange chaos of thought working within. "Am I then infamous?" said he at last, "that these men will not travel in my company. Is it to this the mere accusation of crime has brought me!" And, slight as the incident was, it told upon him as some acrid substance would irritate and corrode an open wound—festering the tender surface.

"Better thus dreaded than the 'Dupe' I have been!" said he, boldly, and entered the inn, where now the preparations for the coming day had begun. He ordered his breakfast, and post-horses for Killaloe, resolved to see Tubbermore once again, ere he left it for ever.

It was a bright morning in the early spring as Cashel drove through the wide-spreading park of Tubbermore. Dewdrops spangled the

grass, amid which crocus and daffodil flowers were scattered. The trees were topped with fresh buds; the birds were chirping and twittering on the branches; the noiseless river, too, flowed past, its circling eddies looking like blossoms on the stream. All was joyous and redolent of promise, save him whose humbled spirit beheld in everything around him the signs of self-reproach.

"These," thought he, "were the rich gifts of fortune that I have squandered! This was the paradise I have laid waste! Here, where I might have lived happy, honoured, and respected, I see myself wretched and shunned! The defeats we meet with in hardy and hazardous enterprise are softened down by having dared danger fearlessly—by having combated manfully with the enemy. But what solace is there for him whose reverses spring from childlike weakness and imbecility—whose life becomes the plaything of parasites and flatterers! Could I ever have thought I would become this? What should I once have said of him who would have prophesied me such as I now am?"

These gloomy reveries grew deeper and darker as he wandered from place to place, and marked the stealthy glances and timid reverences of the peasants as they passed him. "It is only the Jury have called me 'Not Guilty,'" said he to himself; "the world has pronounced another verdict. I have come from that dock as one might have risen from an unhonoured grave, to be looked on with fear and sorrow. Be it so; mine must be a lonely existence."

Every room he entered recalled some scene of his past life. Here was the spacious hall, where, in all the excesses of the banquet, laughter had rung and wit had sparkled, loud toasts were proffered, and high-spirited mirth had once held sway. Here was the drawing-room, where grace and female loveliness were blended, mingling their odours like flowers in a "bouquet." Here, the little chamber he had often sought to visit Lady Kilgoff, and passed those hours of "sweet converse" wherein his whole nature became changed, and his rude pirit softened by the tender influences of a woman's mind. Here was his own favourite room—the spot from which, in many an hour snatched from the cares of host, he had watched the wide-flowing river, and thought of the current of his own life, mingling with his reveries many a high hope and many a glorious promise. And now the whole scene was changed. The mirth, the laughter, the guests, the hopes, were fled, and he stood alone in those silent halls, that never again were to echo with the glad voice of pleasure.

The chief object of his return to Tubbermore was to regain possession of that document which he had concealed in the cleft of a beech-tree, before scaling the approach to the window. He found the spot without difficulty, and soon possessed himself of the paper,

the contents of which, however, from being conveyed in a character he was not familiar with, he could not master.

He next proceeded to the gate-lodge, desirous to see Keane, and make some arrangement for his future support before he should leave Tubbermore. The man, however, was absent; his wife, whose manner betrayed considerable emotion, said that her husband had returned in company with another, who remained without, while he hastily packed a few articles of clothing in a bundle, and then left the house, whither to she knew not.

Roland's last visit was to Tiernay's house; but he, too, was from home. He had accompanied Corrigan to Dublin, intending to take leave of him there; but a few hurried lines told that he had resolved to proceed further with his friends, and darkly hinting that his return to the village was more than doubtful.

Wherever Cashel turned, desertion and desolation met him; and the cutting question that ever recurred to his mind was, "Is this *my* doing? Are these the consequences of *my* folly?" The looks of the villagers seemed to tally with the accusation, as in cold respect they touched their hats as he passed, but never spoke: "not one said God bless him."

He twice set out for the cottage, and twice turned back—his overfull heart almost choked with emotion. The very path that led thither reminded him too fully of the past, and he turned from it into the wood, to wander about for hours long, lost in thought.

He sought and found relief in planning out something for his future life. The discovery of the murderer—the clearing up of the terrible mystery that involved that crime—had become a duty, and he resolved to apply himself to it steadily and determinedly. His unacquitted debt of vengeance on Linton, too, was not forgotten. These accomplished, he resolved again to betake himself to the "new world beyond seas." Wealth had become distasteful to him: it was associated with all that lowered and humiliated him. He felt that with poverty his manly reliance, his courageous daring to confront danger, would return—that once more upon the wild prairie, or the blue waters of the Pacific, he would grow young of heart and high in spirit, forgetting the puerile follies into which a life of affluence had led him. "Would that I could believe it all a dream!" thought he. "Would that this whole year were but a vision, and that I could go back to what I once was, even as 'the Buccaneer' they called me!"

His last hours in Tubbermore were spent in arrangements that showed he never intended to return there. His household was all discharged—his equipages and horses despatched to the capital to be sold—his books, his plate, and all that was valuable in furniture, were ordered to be packed up and transmitted to Dublin. He felt a

kind of malicious pleasure in erasing and effacing, as it were, every trace of the last few months.

"I will leave it," muttered he, "to become the wreck I found it—would that I could be what I was ere I knew it!"

The following day he left Tubbermore for ever, and set out for Dublin.

CHAPTER XXXI.

And, with a sleuth-hound's scent,
Smells blood afar!

It was nightfall when Roland Cashel entered Dublin. The stir and movement of the day were over, and that brief interval which separates the life of business from that of pleasure had succeeded. Few were stirring in the streets, and they were hastening to the dinner-parties, whose hour had now arrived. It was little more than a year since Cashel had entered that same capital, and what a change had come over him within that period! Then, he was buoyant in all the enjoyment of youth, health, and affluence; now, although still young, sorrow and care had worn him into premature age. His native frankness had become distrust; his generous reliance on the world's good faith had changed into a cold and cautious reserve which made him detestable to himself.

Although he passed several of his former acquaintance without being recognised, he could not persuade himself but that their avoidance of him was intentional, and he thought he saw a purpose-like insolence in the pressing entreaties with which the newsvendors persecuted him to buy "The Full and True Report of the Trial of Roland Cashel for Murder."

And thus it was that he whose fastidious modesty had shrunk from everything like the notoriety of fashion, now saw himself exposed to that more terrible ordeal, the notoriety of crime. The consciousness of innocence could not harden him against the poignant suffering the late exposure had inflicted. His whole life laid bare! Not even to gratify the morbid curiosity of gossips; not to amuse the languid listlessness of a world devoured by its own *ennui;* but far worse! To furnish motives for an imputed crime! To give the clue to a murder! In the bitterness of his torn heart, he asked himself—"Have I deserved all this?—Is this the just requital for my conduct towards others? Have the hospitality I have extended, the generous assistance I have proffered—have the thousand extravagances I have committed to gratify others—no other fruits than these?" Alas!

the answer of his enlightened intelligence could no longer blind him by its flatteries. He recognised at last, that to his abuse of fortune were owing all his reverses; that the capricious extravagance of the rich man—his misplaced generosity, his pompous display—can create enemies far more dangerous than all the straits and appliances of rebellious poverty; that the tie of an obligation which can ennoble a generous nature, may, in a bad heart, develop the very darkest elements of iniquity; and that he who refuses to be bound by gratitude is enslaved by hate!

He stopped for an instant before Kennyfeck's house; the closed shutters and close-drawn blinds bespoke it still the abode of mourning. He passed the residence of the Kilgoffs, and there, the grass-grown steps and rusted knocker spoke of absence. They had left the country. He next came to his own mansion—that spacious building which, at the same hour, was wont to be brilliant with wax-lights and besieged by fast-arriving guests, where the throng of carriages pressed forward in eager haste, and where, as each step descended, some form or figure moved by, great in fame or more illustrious still by beauty. Now, all was dark, gloomy, and deserted. A single gleam of light issued from the kitchen, which was speedily removed as Roland knocked at the door.

The female servant who opened the door nearly dropped the candle as she recognised the features of her master, who, without speaking, passed on, and, without even removing his hat, entered the library. Profuse in apologies for the disorder of the furniture, and excuses for the absence of the other servants, she followed him into the room, and stood, half in shame and half in terror, gazing at the wan and worn countenance of him she remembered the very ideal of health and youth.

"If we only knew your honour was coming home to-night——"

"I did not know it myself, good woman, at this hour yesterday. Let me have something to eat—well, a crust of bread and a glass of wine—there's surely so much in the house?"

"I can give your honour some bread, but all the wine is packed up and gone."

"Gone! whither, and by whose order?" said Roland, calmly.

"Mr. Phillis, Sir, sent it off about ten days ago, with the plate, and I hear both are off to America!"

"The bread alone, then, with a glass of water, will do," said he, without any emotion or the least evidence of surprise in his manner.

"The fare smacks of the prison still," said Roland, as he sat at his humble meal; "and truly the house itself is almost as gloomy."

The aspect of everything was sad and depressing. Neglect and disorder pervaded wherever he turned his steps. In some of the rooms the remains of past orgies still littered the tables. Smashed

vases of rare porcelain, broken mirrors, torn pictures—all the work, in fact, which ruffian intemperance in its most savage mood accomplishes—told who were they who replaced his fashionable society; while, as if to show the unfeeling spirit of the revellers, several of the pasquinades against himself, the libellous calumnies of the low press, the disgusting caricatures of infamous prints, were scattered about amid the wrecks of the debauch.

Roland saw these things with sorrow, but without anger. "I must have fallen low indeed," muttered he, "when it is by such men I am judged."

In the room which once had been his study a great pile of unsettled bills covered the table, the greater number of which he remembered to have given the money for; there were no letters, however, nor even one card of an acquaintance, so that, save to his creditors, his very existence seemed to be forgotten.

Wearied of his sad pilgrimage from room to room, he sat down at last in a small boudoir, which it had been his caprice once to adorn with the portraits of "his friends!" sketched by a fashionable artist. There they were, all smiling blandly, as he left them. What a commentary on their desertion of him were the looks so full of benevolence and affection! There was Frobisher, lounging in all the ease of fashionable indifference, but still with a smile upon his languid features. There was Upton, the very picture of straightforward good feeling and frankness. There was Jennings, all beaming with generosity; and Linton, too, occupying the chief place, seemed to stare with the very expression of resolute attachment that so often had imposed on Cashel, and made him think him a most devoted, but perhaps an indiscreet, friend. Roland's own portrait had been turned to the wall, while on the reverse was written, in large characters, the words, "To be hung, or hanged, elsewhere." The brutal jest brought the colour for an instant to his cheek, but the next moment he was calm and tranquil as before.

Lost in musings, the time stole by; and it was late in the night ere he betook himself to rest. His sleep was the heavy slumber of an overworked mind; but he awoke refreshed and with a calm courage to breast the tide of fortune, however it might run.

Life seemed to present to him two objects of paramount interest. One of these was the discovery of Kennyfeck's murderer; the second was the payment of his debt of vengeance to Linton. Some secret instinct induced him to couple the two together; and although neither reason nor reflection afforded a clue to link them, they came ever in company before his mind, and rose like one fact before him.

Mr. Hammond, the eminent lawyer, to whom he had written a few lines, came punctually at ten o'clock to confer with him. Roland had determined to reveal no more of his secret to the ears of counsel than

he had done before the Court, when an accidental circumstance totally changed the course of his proceeding.

"I have sent for you, Mr. Hammond," said Cashel, as soon as they were seated, "to enlist your skilful services in tracing out the real authors of a crime of which I narrowly escaped the penalty. I will first, however, entreat your attention to another matter, for this may be the last opportunity ever afforded me of personally consulting you."

"You purpose to live abroad, Sir?" asked Hammond.

"I shall return to Mexico," said Roland, briefly; and then resumed: "Here is a document, Sir, of whose tenor and meaning I am ignorant, but of whose importance I cannot entertain a doubt: will you peruse it?"

Hammond opened the parchment; but scarcely had his eyes glanced over it, when he laid it down before him, and said:

"I have seen this before, Mr. Cashel. You are aware that I already gave you my opinion as to its value?"

"I am not aware of that," said Roland, calmly. "Pray, in whose possession did you see it, and what does it mean?"

Hammond seemed confused for a few seconds; and then, as if overcoming a scruple, said:

"We must both be explicit here, Sir. This document was shown to me, by Mr. Linton, at Limerick, he alleging that it was at your desire and by your request. As to its import, it simply means that you hold your present estates without a title; that document being a full pardon, revoking all penalty of confiscation against the heirs of Miles Corrigan, and reinstating them and theirs in their ancient possessions. Now, Sir, may I ask, do you hear this for the first time?"

Roland nodded in acquiescence; his heart was too full for utterance, and the sudden revulsion of his feeling had brought a sickly sensation over him.

"Mr. Linton," resumed Hammond, "in showing me this deed, spoke of a probable alliance between you and the granddaughter of Mr. Corrigan; and I freely concurred in the propriety of a union which might at once settle the difficulty of a very painful litigation. He promised me more full information on the subject, and engaged me to make searches for a registry, if such existed, of the pardon; but I heard nothing more from him, and the matter escaped my memory till this moment."

"So that all this while I have been dissipating that which was not mine," said Roland, with a bitterness of voice and manner that bespoke what he suffered.

"You have done what some thousands have done, are doing, and will do hereafter—enjoyed possession of that which the law gave you, and which a deeper research into the same law may take away."

"And Linton knew this?"

"He certainly knew my opinion of this document; but am I to suppose that you were ignorant of it up to this moment?"

"You shall hear all," said Cashel, passing his hand across his brow, which now ached with the torture of intense emotion. "To save myself from all the ignominy of a felon's death, I did not reveal this before. It was with me as a point of honour, that I would reserve this man for a personal vengeance; but now, a glimmering light is breaking on my brain, that darker deeds than all he worked against me lie at his door, and that in following up my revenge I may be but robbing the scaffold of its due. Listen to me, attentively." So saying, Cashel narrated every event of the memorable day of Kennyfeck's death, detailing his meeting with Enrique in the glen, and his last interview with Linton in his dressing-room.

Hammond heard all with deepest interest, only interrupting at times to ask such questions as might throw light upon the story. The whole body of the circumstantial evidence against Roland not only became easily explicable, but the shrewd perception of the lawyer also saw the consummate skill with which the details had been worked into regular order, and what consistency had been imparted to them. The great difficulty of the case lay in the fact, that, supposing Kennyfeck's death had been planned by others, with the intention of imputing the crime to Cashel, yet all the circumstances, or nearly all, which seemed to imply his guilt, were matters of perfect accident for which they never could have provided, nor even ever foreseen: such as his entrance by the window—his torn dress—the wound of his hand—and the blood upon his clothes.

"I see but one clue to this mystery," said Hammond, thoughtfully; "but the more I reflect upon it, the more likely does it seem. Kennyfeck's fate was intended for you—he fell by a mistake."

Roland started with astonishment, but listened with deep attention, as Hammond recapitulated everything which accorded with this assumption.

"But why was one of my own pistols taken for the deed?"

"Perhaps to suggest the notion of suicide."

"How could my death have been turned to profit? Was I not better as the living dupe than as the dead enemy?"

"Do you not see how your death legalised the deed with a forged signature? Who was to dispute its authenticity? Besides, how know we what ambitions Linton may not have cherished when holding in his hands the only title to the estate. We may go too fast with these suspicions, but let us not reject them as inconsistent. Who is this same witness, Keane? What motives had he for the gratitude he evinced on the trial?"

"None whatever: on the contrary, I never showed him any favour; it was even my intention to dismiss him from the gate-lodge!"

"And he was aware of this?"

"Perfectly. He had besought several people to intercede for him, Linton among the rest."

"So that he was known to Linton? And what has become of him since the trial?"

"That is the strangest of all. My wish was to have done something for the poor fellow. I could not readily forget the feeling he showed, at a moment, too, when none seemed to remember me; so that when I reached Tubbermore I at once repaired to the lodge, but he was gone."

"And in what direction?"

"His wife could not tell. The poor creature was distracted at being deserted, and seemed to think—from what cause I know not—that he would not return. He had come back after the trial in company with another, who remained on the roadside while Keane hastily packed up some clothes, after which they departed together."

"This must be thought of," said Hammond, gravely, while he wrote some lines in his note-book.

"It is somewhat strange, indeed," said Cashel, "that the very men to whom my gratitude is most due are those who seem to avoid me. Thus, Jones, who gave me his aid upon the trial——"

"Do not speak of him, Sir," said Hammond, in a voice of agitation; "he is one who has sullied an order that has hitherto been almost without a stain. There is but too much reason to think that he was bribed to destroy you. His whole line of cross-examination on the trial was artfully devised to develop whatever might injure you; but the treachery turned upon the men who planned it. The Attorney-General saw it, and the Court also. It was this saved you."

Cashel sat powerless and speechless at this disclosure. It seemed to fill up in his mind the cup of iniquity, and he never moved nor uttered a word as he listened.

"Jones you will never see again. The bar of some other land across the sea may receive him, but there is not one here who would stoop to be his colleague. But now for others more important. I will this day obtain the Judge's notes of the trial, and give the whole case the deepest consideration. Inquiry shall be set on foot as to Keane, with whom he has gone, and in what direction. Linton, too, must be watched; the report is that he lies dangerously ill at his country-house, but that story may be invented to gain time."

Cashel could scarcely avoid a smile at the rapidity with which the lawyer detailed his plan of operation, and threw out, as he went, the signs of distrust so characteristic of his craft. As for himself, he

was enjoined to remain in the strictest privacy—to see no one, nor even to leave the house, except after nightfall.

"Rely upon it," said Hammond, "your every movement is watched; and our object will be to ascertain by whom. This will be our first clue; and when we obtain one, others will soon follow."

It was no privation for Cashel to follow a course so much in accordance with his wishes. Solitude—even that which consigned him to the saddest reveries—was far more pleasurable than any intercourse; so that he never ventured beyond the walls of his house for weeks, nor exchanged a word, except with Hammond, who regularly visited him each day, to report the progress of his investigation.

The mystery did not seem to clear away, even by the skilful contrivances of the lawyer. Of Keane not a trace could be discovered; nor could any clue be obtained as to his companion. All that Hammond knew was, that although a doctor's carriage daily drove to Linton's house, Linton himself had long since left the country—it was believed for the Continent.

Disappointed by continual failures, and wearied by a life whose only excitement lay in anxieties and cares, Cashel grew each day sadder and more depressed. The desire for vengeance, too, that first had filled his mind, grew weaker as time rolled on. The wish to reinstate himself fully in the world's esteem diminished, as he lived apart from all its intercourse, and he sank into a low despondency, which soon showed its ravages upon his face and figure.

One object alone remained for him—this was to seek out Corrigan and place in his hand the document of his ancestor's pardon; this done, Roland resolved to betake himself to Mexico, and again, among the haunts of his youth, to try and forget that life of civilisation which had cost him so dearly.

CHAPTER XXXII.

How sweete and lovely dost thou make the shame
Which, like a canker in the fragrant rose,
Doth spot the beautie of thy budding name.

Some years passed over, and the name of Roland Cashel ceased to be uttered, or his memory even evoked, in that capital where once his wealth, his eccentricities and his notoriety, had been the theme of every tongue. A large neglected-looking house, with closed shutters and grass-grown steps, would attract the attention of some passing stranger to ask whom it belonged to, but the name of Mr. Cashel was

almost all that many knew of him, and a vague impression that he was travelling in some remote and far-away land.

Tubbermore, too, fell back into its former condition of ruin and decay. No one seemed to know into whose hands the estate had fallen, but the talismanic word "Chancery" appeared to satisfy every inquiry, and account for a desolation that brooded over the property and all who dwelt on it. The very "Cottage" had yielded to the course of time, and little remained of it save a few damp discoloured walls and blackened chimneys; while here and there a rare shrub, or a tree of foreign growth, rose among the rank weeds and thistles, to speak of the culture which once had been the pride of this lovely spot.

Had there been a "curse upon the place," it could not have been more dreary and sad-looking.

Of the gate-lodge—where Keane lived—a few straggling ruins alone remained, in a corner of which a miserable family was herded together, their wan looks and tattered clothing showing that they were dependent for existence on the charity of the very poor. These were Keane's wife and children, to whom he never again returned. There was a blight over everything. The tenantry themselves, no longer subject to the visits of the agent, the stimulus to all industry withdrawn, would scarcely labour for their own support, but passed their lives in brawls and quarrels, which more than once had led to a felon's sentence. The land lay untilled; the cattle, untended, strayed at will through the unfenced fields. The villages on the property were crammed by a host of runaway wretches whose crimes had driven them from their homes, till at length the district became the plague-spot of the country, where, even at noonday, few strangers were bold enough to enter, and the word "Tubbermore" had a terrible significance in the neighbourhood round about.

Let us now turn for the last time to him whose fortune had so powerfully influenced his property, and whose dark destiny seemed to throw its shadow over all that once was his. For years Roland Cashel had been a wanderer. He travelled every country of the Old World and the New; his appearance and familiarity with the language enabling him to assume the nationality of a Spaniard, and thus screen him from that painful notoriety to which his story was certain to expose him. Journeying alone, and in the least expensive manner—for he no longer considered himself entitled to any of the property he once enjoyed—he made few acquaintances and contracted no friendships. One object alone gave a zest to existence—to discover Mr. Corrigan, and place within his hands the title-deeds of Tubbermore. With this intention he had searched through more than half of Europe, visiting the least frequented towns, and pursuing inquiries in every possible direction; at one moment cheered by some glimmer-

ing prospect of success, at another dashed by disappointment and failure. If a thought of Linton did occasionally cross him, he struggled manfully to overcome the temptings of a passion which should thwart the dearest object of his life, and make vengeance predominate over truth and honesty. As time rolled on the spirit of his hatred became gradually weaker; and if he did not forgive all the ills his treachery had worked, his memory of them was less frequent and less painful.

His was a cheerless, for it was a friendless, existence. Avoiding his own countrymen from the repugnance he felt to sustain his disguise by falsehood, he wandered from land to land and city to city like some penitent in the accomplishment of a vow. The unbroken monotony of this life, the continued pressure of disappointment, at last began to tell upon him, and in his moody abstractions—his fits of absence and melancholy—might be seen the change which had come over him. He might have been a long time ignorant of an alteration which not only impressed his mind, but even his "outward man," when his attention was drawn to the fact by overhearing the observations of some young Englishmen upon his appearance, as he sat one evening in a *café* at Naples. Conversing in all that careless freedom of our young countrymen, which never supposes that their language can be understood by others, they criticised his dress, his sombre look, and his manner; and, after an animated discussion as to whether he were a refugee political offender, a courier, or a spy, they wound up by a wager that he was at least forty years of age, one of the party dissenting, on the ground that, although he looked it, it was rather from something on the fellow's mind than years.

"How shall we find out?" cried the proposer of the bet. "I, for one, shouldn't like to ask him his age."

"If I knew Spanish enough, I'd do it at once," said another.

"It might cost you dearly, Harry, for all that; he looks marvellously like a fellow that wouldn't brook trifling."

"He wouldn't call it trifling to lose me ten 'carlines,' and I'm sure I should win my wager; so here goes at him with French." Rising at the same moment, the young man crossed the room and stood before the table where Cashel sat, with folded arms and bent-down head, listening in utter indifference to all that passed. "Monsieur!" said the youth, bowing. Cashel looked up, and his dark, heavily-browed eyes seemed to abash the other, who stood, blushing, and uncertain what to do.

With faltering accents and downcast look he began to mutter excuses for his intrusion; when Cashel, in a mild and gentle voice, interrupted him, saying in English, "I am your countryman, young gentleman, and my age not six-and-twenty."

The quiet courtesy of his manner as he spoke, as well as the sur-

prise at his being English, seemed to increase the youth's shame for the liberty he had taken, and he was profuse in his apologies; but Cashel soon allayed this anxiety by adroitly turning to another part of the subject, and saying, "If I look much older than I am, it is that I have travelled and lived a good deal in southern climates, not to speak of other causes, which give premature age."

A slight, a very slight touch of melancholy in the latter words gave them a deep interest to the youth; who, with a boyish frankness—far more fascinating than more finished courtesy—asked Roland if he would join their party. Had such a request been made half an hour before, or had it come in more formal fashion, Cashel would inevitably have declined it; but what between the generous candour of the youth's address, and a desire to show that he did not resent his intrusion, Cashel acceded good naturedly, and took his seat amongst them.

As Roland listened to the joyous freshness of their boyish talk—the high-hearted hope—the sanguine trustfulness with which they regarded life—he remembered what but a few years back he had himself been. He saw in them the self-same elements which had led him on to every calamity that he suffered—the passionate pursuit of pleasure—the inexhaustible craving for excitement that makes life the feverish paroxysm of a malady.

They sat to a late hour together; and when they separated, the chance acquaintance had ripened into intimacy. Night after night they met in the same place; and while they were charmed with the gentle seriousness of one in whom they could recognise the most manly daring, he, on his side, was fascinated by the confiding warmth and the generous frankness of their youth.

One evening, as they assembled as usual, Roland remarked a something like unusual excitement amongst them; and learned, that from a letter they had received that morning, they were about to leave Naples the next day. There seemed some mystery in the reason, and a kind of reserve in even alluding to it, which made Cashel half suspect that they had been told who he was, and that a dislike to further intercourse had suggested the departure. It was the feeling that never left him by day or night—that dogged his waking and haunted his dreams—that he was one to be shunned and avoided by his fellowmen. His pride, long dormant, arose under the supposed slight, and he was about to say a cold farewell, when the elder of the party, whose name was Sidney, said:

"How I wish you were coming with us!"

"Whither to?" said Cashel, hurriedly.

"To Venice—say, is this possible?"

"I am free to turn my steps in any direction—too free—for I have neither course to sail nor harbour to reach."

"Come with us, then, Roland," cried they all, "and our journey will be delightful."

"But why do you start so hurriedly? What is there to draw you from this at the very brightest season of the year?"

"There is rather that which draws us to Venice," said Sidney, colouring slightly; "but this is our secret, and you shall not hear it till we are on our way."

Roland's curiosity was not exacting; he asked no more: nor was it till they had proceeded some days on their journey that Sidney confided to him the sudden cause of their journey, which he did in the few words:

"La Ninetta is at Venice—she is at the 'Fenice.'"

"But who is La Ninetta? You forget that you are speaking to one who lives out of the world."

"Not know La Ninetta!" exclaimed he; "never have seen her?"

"Never even heard of her."

To the pause which the shock of the first astonishment imposed there now succeeded a burst of enthusiastic description, in which the three youths vied with each other who should be most eloquent in praise. Her beauty, her gracefulness, the witching fascination of her movements, the enchanting captivation of her smile, were themes they never wearied of. Nor was it till he had suffered the enthusiasm to take its course that they would listen to his calm question:

"Is she an actress?"

"She is the first '*Ballarina*' of the world," cried one. "None ever did, nor ever will, dance like her."

"They say she is a *Prima Donna*, too; but how could such excellence be united in one creature?"

To their wild transports of praise Roland listened patiently, in the hope that he might glean something of her story; but they knew nothing, except that she was reputed to be a Sicilian, of a noble family, whose passion for the stage had excited the darkest enmity of her relatives; insomuch, that it was said she was tracked from city to city by hired assassins. She remained two days at Naples; she appeared but once at Rome; in Genoa, though announced, she never came to the theatre. Such were the extravagant tales, heightened by all the colour of romantic adventure—how, at one time, she had escaped from a royal palace by leaping into the sea—how, at another, she had ridden through a squadron of the Swiss Guard, sabre in hand, and got clean away from Bologna, where a cardinal's letter had arrested her. Incidents, the strangest, the least probable, were recounted of her: the high proffers of marriage she had rejected—the alliances, even with royal blood, she had refused. There was nothing, where her name figured, that seemed impossible; hers was a destiny above all the rules that guide humbler mortals.

Excellence, of whatever kind it be, has always this attraction—that it forms a standard by which men measure with each other their capacities of enjoyment and their powers of appreciation. Roland's curiosity was stimulated, therefore, to behold with his own eyes the wonder which had excited these youthful heroics. He had long since ceased to be sanguine on any subject; and he felt that he could sustain disappointment on graver matters than this.

When they reached Venice, they found that city in a state of enthusiastic excitement fully equal to their own. All the excesses into which admiration for art can carry a people insensible to other emotions than those which minister to the senses, had been committed to welcome "La Regina de la Balla." Her *entrée* had been like a triumph; garlands of flowers, bouquets, rich tapestries floating from balconies, gondolas with bands of music; the civic authorities even, in robes of state, met her as she entered; strangers flocked in crowds from the other cities of the north, and even from parts beyond the Alps. The hotels were crammed with visitors, all eager to see one of whom every tongue was telling. A guard of honour stood before the palace in which she resided—as much a measure of necessity to repel the pressure of the anxious crowd as it was a mark of distinction.

The epidemic character of enthusiasm is well known. It is a fervour to which none can remain insensible. Cashel was soon to experience this. How could he preserve a cold indifference to the emotions which swayed thousands around him? How maintain his calm amid that host, which surged and fretted like the sea in a storm? La Ninetta was the one word repeated on every side; even to have seen her once was a distinction, and they who had already felt her fascinations were listened to as oracles.

She was to give but three representations at Venice, and ere Cashel's party had arrived all the tickets were already disposed of. By unceasing efforts, and considerable bribery, they contrived at last to obtain places for the first night, and early in the forenoon were admitted among a privileged number to take their seats. They who were thus, at a heavy cost, permitted to anticipate the general public, seemed—at least to Cashel's eyes—to fill the house; and so, in the dim indistinctness, they appeared. Wherever the eye turned, from the dark parterre, below, to the highest boxes, above, seemed filled with people. There was something almost solemn in that vast concourse, who sat subdued and silent in the misty half light of the theatre. The intense anxiety of expectation, the dreary gloom of the scene, contributed to spread a kind of awe-struck influence around, and brought up to Roland's memory a very different place and occasion—when, himself the observed of all observers, he stood in the felon's dock. Lost in the gloomy reverie these sad thoughts

suggested, he took no note of time, nor marked the lagging hours which stole heavily past.

Suddenly the full glare of light burst forth, and displayed the great theatre crowded in every part. That glittering spectacle, into which beauty, splendour of dress, jewels, and rich uniforms enter, broke upon the sight, while a kind of magnetic sense of expectancy seemed to pervade all, and make conversation a mere murmur. The opera—a well-known one of a favourite composer, and admirably sustained—attracted little attention. The thrilling cadences, the brilliant passages, all fell upon senses that had no relish for their excellence; and even the conventional good-breeding of the spectators was not proof against the signs of impatience that every now and then were manifested.

The third act at last began, and the scene represented a Spanish village of the New World, which, had it been even less correct and true to nature, had yet possessed no common attraction for Roland—recalling by a hundred little traits a long unvisited but well-remembered land. The usual troops of villagers paraded about in all that mock grace which characterises the peasant of the ballet. There were the same active mountaineers, the same venerable fathers, the comely matrons with little baskets of nothing carefully covered by snowy napkins, and the young maidens, who want only beauty to make them what they affect to be. Roland gazed at all this with the indifference a stupid prelude ever excites, and would rapidly have been wearied, when a sudden pause in the music ensued, and then a death-like stillness reigned through the house. The orchestra again opened, and with a melody which thrilled through every fibre of Roland's heart. It was a favourite Mexican air; one to which, in happier times, he had often danced. What myriads of old memories came flocking to his mind as he listened! What fancies came thronging around him! Every bar of the measure beat responsively with some association of the past. He leaned his head downwards, and, covering his face with his hands, all thought of the present was lost, and in imagination he was back again on the green sward before the "Villa de las Noches;" the mocking-bird and the nightingale were filling the air with their warblings; the sounds of gay voices, the plash of fountains, the meteor-like flashes of the fire-flies, were all before him. He knew not that a thousand voices were shouting around him in wildest enthusiasm—that bouquets of rarest flowers strewed the stage—that every form adulation can take was assumed towards one on whom every eye save his own was bent; and that, before her, rank, beauty, riches—all that the world makes its idols—were now bending in deepest homage. He knew nothing of all this, as he sat with bent-down head, lost in his own bright dreamings. At length he looked up, but, instead of his fancy being dissipated by

reality, it now assumed form and substance. There was the very scenery of that far-off land; the music was the national air of Mexico; the dance was the haughty Manolo; and, oh! was it that his brain was wandering—had reason, shaken by many a rude shock, given way at last? The dancer—she, on whose witching graces every glance was bent—was Maritaña! There she stood, more beautiful than he had ever seen her before; her dark hair encircled with brilliants, her black eyes flashing in all the animation of triumph, and her fairly-rounded limbs the perfection of symmetry.

Oh no! this was some mind-drawn picture; this was the shadowy image that failing intellect creates ere all is lost in chaos and confusion! Such was the conflict in his brain as, with staring eyeballs, he tracked her as she moved, and followed each graceful bend, each proud commanding attitude. Nor was it till the loud thunder-roll of applause had drawn her to the front of the stage, to acknowledge the favour by a deep reverence, that he became assured beyond all question. Then, when he saw the long dark lashes fall upon the rounded cheek, when he beheld the crossed arm upon her bosom, and marked the taper fingers he had so often held within his own, in a transport of feeling, where pride, and joy, and shame, and sorrow, had each their share, he cried aloud:

"Oh, Maritaña! Maritaña! Shame! shame!"

Scarcely had the wild cry re-echoed through the house than, with a scream, whose terror pierced every heart, the girl started from her studied attitude, and rushed forward towards the foot-lights, her frighted looks and pale cheeks seeming ghastly with emotion.

"Where?—where?" cried she. "Speak again—I know the voice!" But already a scene of uproar and confusion had arisen in the parterre around Cashel, whose interruption of the piece called down universal reprobation; and cries of "Out with him!" "Away with him!" rose on every side.

Struggling madly and fiercely against his assailants, Cashel for a brief space seemed likely to find his way to the stage; but overcome by numbers, he was subdued at last, and consigned to the hands of the guard. His last look, still turned to the "scene," showed him Maritaña, as she was carried away senseless and fainting.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The laughing Seine, whose midnight flood
Shrouds many a deed of crime and blood!
WARREN.

THEY alone who have passed much of their lives on the Continent of Europe can estimate the amount of excitement caused by such an incident as that we have just related. So much of life is centred in the theatre, so many interests revolve around it, engrossing, as it does, so much of the passions and the prejudices of those whose existence seldom rises above the pursuit of pleasure, that anything which might interrupt "the scene," which should disturb its progress, or mar its effect, is sure to evoke the loudest evidence of public indignation. Where a high cultivation of the arts is employed to gloss over the corruptions of a vicious system, it may be easily conceived how men would be judged more leniently for crimes than for those minor offences which rebel against the usages of good society.

The "Ballet interrupted in its most interesting moment," "La Ninetta carried away fainting at the very commencement of her most attractive movement," insulted—so it was rumoured—"by some offensive epithet of a Spaniard," were enough to carry indignation to the highest pitch, and it needed the protection of the guard to screen him from the popular vengeance.

After a night of feverish anxiety, where hopes and fears warred and conflicted with each other, Cashel was early on the following morning conducted before the Chief Commissary of the Police. His passport represented him as a Spaniard, and he adhered to the pretended nationality to avoid the dreaded notoriety of his name.

While he answered the usual questions as to age, religion, and profession, an officer deposited a sealed paper in the hands of the Prefetto; who, opening it, appeared to study the contents with much care.

"You have called yourself Il Señor Roland da Castel, Sir?" said the official, staring fixedly upon him. "Have you always gone by this name?"

"In Mexico and the New World I was ever known as such. In England men call me Roland Cashel."

"Which is your more fitting appellation—is it not?"

"Yes."

"You are then an English, and not a Spanish subject?"

He nodded assent.

"You were, however, in a South American service?" said the Prefetto, reading from his paper.

Roland bowed again.

"In which service, or pretended service, you commanded a slaver?"

"This is untrue," said Cashel, calmly.

"I have it asserted here, however, by those of whose statements you have already acknowledged the accuracy."

"It is not the less a falsehood."

"Perhaps you will allow more correctness to the next allegation? It is said that, under the pretended right to a large inheritance, you visited England, and succeeded in preferring a claim to a vast estate?"

Roland bent his head in assent.

"And that to this property you possessed neither right nor title?"

Roland started: the charge involved a secret he believed unknown, save to himself, Hammond, and Linton, and he could not master his surprise enough to reply.

"But a weightier allegation is yet behind, Sir," said the Prefetto, sternly. "Are you the same Roland Cashel whose trial for murder occupied the assizes of Ennis in the spring of the year 18— ?"

"I am," said Cashel, faintly.

"Your escape of conviction depended on the absence of a material witness for the prosecution, I believe?"

"I was acquitted because I was not guilty, Sir."

"On that point we are not agreed," said the Prefetto, sarcastically; "but you have admitted enough to warrant me in the course I shall pursue respecting you—the fact of a false name and passport, the identity with a well-known character admitted—I have now to detain you in custody until such time as the Consul of your country may take steps for your conveyance to England, where already new evidence of your criminality awaits you. Yes, prisoner, the mystery which involved your guilt is at length about to be dissipated, and the day of expiation draws nigh."

Roland did not speak. Shame at the degraded position he occupied, even in the eyes of those with whom he had associated, overwhelmed him, and he suffered himself to be led away without a word.

Alone in the darkness and silence of a prison, he sat indifferent to what might befal him, wearied of himself and all the world.

Days, even weeks passed on, and none inquired after him; he seemed forgotten of all, when the Consul, who had been absent, having returned, it was discovered that the allegations respecting the murder were not sufficient to warrant his being transmitted to England, and that the only charge against him lay in the assumed nationality—an offence it was deemed sufficiently expiated by his imprisonment. He was free then once more—free to wander forth into

the world where his notoriety had been already proclaimed, and where, if not his guilt, his shame was published.

Of Maritaña all that he could learn was that she had left Venice without again appearing in public; but in what direction none knew accurately. Cashel justly surmised that she had not gone without seeing him once more, had it not been from the compulsion of others; and if he grieved to think they were never to meet more, he felt a secret consolation on reflecting how much of mutual shame and sorrow was spared them. Shame was indeed the predominant emotion of his mind; shame for his now sullied name—his character tarnished by the allegations of crime; and shame for her, degraded to a "*Ballarina*."

Had Fortune another reverse in store for him? Was there one cherished hope still remaining? Had life one solitary spot to which he could now direct his weary steps, and be at rest? The publicity which late events had given to his name, rendered him more timid and retiring than ever. A morbid sense of modesty—a shrinking dread of the slights to which he would be exposed in the world—made him shun all intercourse, and live a life of utter seclusion.

Like all men who desire solitude, he soon discovered that it is alone attainable in great cities. Where the great human tide runs full and strong, the scattered wrecks are scarcely noticeable.

To Paris, therefore, he repaired; not to that brilliant Paris where sensuality and vice costume themselves in all the brilliant hues derived from the highest intellectual culture, but to the dark and gloomy Paris which lies between the arms of the Seine—the "Ile St. Louis." There, amid the vestiges of an extinct feudalism, and the trials of a present wretchedness, he passed his life in strict solitude. In a mean apartment, whose only solace was the view of the river, with a few books picked up on a neighbouring stall, and the moving crowd beneath his window to attract his wandering thoughts, he lived his lonely life. The past alone occupied his mind: for the future he had neither care nor interest, but of his bygone life he could dream for hours. These memories he used to indulge each evening in a particular spot; it was an old and ruinous stair which descended to the river, from a little wooden platform, near where he lived. It had been long disused, and suffered to fall into rot and decay. Here he sat, each night, watching the twinkling lights that glittered along the river, and listening to the distant hum of that great hive of pleasure that lay beyond it.

That the neighbourhood about was one of evil repute and danger, mattered little to one who set small store by his life, and whose stalwart figure and signs of personal prowess were not unknown in the quarter. The unbroken solitude of the spot was its attraction to him, and truly none ever ventured near it after nightfall.

There he was sitting, one night, as usual, musing, as was his wont. It was a period when men's minds were stirred by the expectation of some great but unknown event: a long political stagnation—the dead sea of hopeless apathy—was beginning to be ruffled by short and fitful blasts that told of a coming hurricane. Vague rumours of a change —scattered sentences of some convulsion, whence proceeding, or whither tending, none could guess—were abroad. The long-sleeping terrors of a past time of blood were once more remembered, and men talked of the guillotine and the scaffold as household themes. It was the summer of 1830—that memorable year, whose deeds were to form but the prologue of the great drama we are to-day the spectators at. Roland heard these things, as he who wanders along the shore at night may hear the brooding signs of a gathering storm, but has no "venture on the sea." He thought of them—with a certain interest, too—but it was with that interest into which no personal feeling enters; for how could great convulsions of states affect *him?* How could the turn of fortune raise or depress him?

He sat, now pondering over his own destiny, now wondering whither the course of events to come was tending, when he heard the plash of oars, and the rushing sound of a boat moving through the water in the direction of the stair. The oars, which at some moments were plied vigorously, ceased to move at others; and, as well as Cashel could mark, the course of the boat seemed once or twice to be changed. Roland descended to the lowest step of the ladder, the better to see what this might portend. That terrible river, on whose smiling eddies the noonday sun dances so joyously, covers beneath the shadow of night crimes the most awful and appalling.

As Cashel listened, he perceived that the rowing had ceased, and two voices, whose accents sounded like altercation, could be heard.

The boat, drifting, meanwhile, downward on the fast current, was now nearly opposite to where he sat, but only perceptible as a dark speck upon the water. The night was calm, without a breath of wind, and on the vapour-charged atmosphere sounds floated dull and heavily; still Cashel could hear the harsh tones of men in angry dispute, and to his amazement they spoke in English.

"It's the old story," cried one, whose louder voice and coarser accents bespoke him the inferior in condition—"the old story that I am sick of listening to—when you have luck! when you have luck!"

"I used not to have a complaint against Fortune," said the other. "Before we met, she had treated me well for many a year."

"And 'twas me that changed it, I suppose," said the first, in the same insolent tone as before: "do you mean that?"

"The world has gone ill with me since that day."

"And whose fault is that?"

"Partly yours," said the other, in a slow, deliberate voice, every

syllable of which thrilled through Cashel's heart as he listened. "Had you secured the right man, it was beyond the power of Fortune to hurt either of us. That fatal, fatal mistake!"

"How could I help it?" cried the other, energetically; "the night was as dark as this—it was between two high banks—there was nothing to be seen but a figure of a man coming slowly along—you yourself told me who it would be—I didn't wait for more; and troth"—here he gave a fiendish laugh—"troth! you'll allow the work was well done."

"It was a most determined murder," said the other, thoughtfully.

"Murder! murder!" screamed the first, in a voice of fierce passion; "and is it you that calls it a murder?"

"No matter how it is called. Let us speak of something else."

"Very well. Let us talk about the price of it. It isn't paid yet!"

"Is it nothing that I have taken you from abject, starving misery, from a life of cold, want, and wretchedness, to live at ease in the first city of the universe? Is it no part of the price that you spend your days in pleasure and your nights in debauch?—that, with the appetite of the peasant you partake of the excesses of the gentleman? Is it no instalment of the debt, I say, that you, who might now be ground down to the very earth as a slave at home, dare to lift your head and speak thus to *me?*"

"And is it *you* dares to tell me this?" cried the other, in savage energy; "is it you, that made me a murderer, and then think that I can forget it because I'm a drunkard? But I don't forget it! I'll never forget it! I see him still, as he lay gasping before me, and trying to beg for mercy when he couldn't ask for it. I see him every day when I'm in a lonely place; and, oh! he's never away from me at night, with his bloody hands on his head trying to save it, and screaming out for God to help him. And what did I get for it? answer me that," yelled he, in accents shrill with passion. "Is it my wife begging from door to door—is it my children naked and hungry—is it my little place, a ruin and a curse over it—or is it myself trying to forget it in drink, not knowing the day nor the hour that it will rise up against me, and that I'll be standing in the dock where I saw *him* that you tried to murder too?"

"There is no use in all this passion," said the other, calmly; "let us be friends, Tom: it is our interest to be so."

"Them's the very words you towld Mr. Phillis, and the next day he was taken up for the robbery, and you had him transported."

"Phillis was a fool, and paid the penalty of a fool; but you are a shrewd fellow, who can see to his own advantage. Now listen to me calmly: were it not for bad luck, we might all of us have had more money now than we could count or squander. Had Maritaña continued upon the stage, her gains would by this time have been enor-

mous. The bank, too, would have prospered; her beauty would have drawn around us all that was wealthy and dissipated in the world of fashion; we could have played what stake we pleased. Princes, ambassadors, ministers of state, would have been our game. Curses be on his head who spoiled this glorious plan! From that unhappy night at Venice she never would appear again, nor could she. The shock has been like a blight upon her. You have seen her yourself, and know what it has made her."

The artifice by which the speaker contrived to change the topic, and withdraw the other from a painful subject to one of seeming confidence, was completely successful; and in the altered tone of voice might be read the change which had come over him.

"You wish to go to America, Tom?" continued he, after a pause.

"Ay; I never feel safe here. I'm too near home."

"Well, if everything prospers with us, you shall have the money by Tuesday—Wednesday at furthest. Rica has at last found a clue to old Corrigan, and although he seems in great poverty, his name upon a bill will still raise some hundreds."

"I don't care who pays it, but I must get it," said the other, whose savage mood seemed to have returned. "I'll not stay here. 'Tis little profit or pleasure I have standin' every night to see the crowds that are passing in, to be cheated out of their money—to hear the clink of the goold I'm never to handle—and to watch all the fine livin' and coortin' that I've no share in."

"Be satisfied. You shall have the money; I pledge my word upon it."

"I don't care for your word. I have a better security than ever it was."

"And what may that be?" said the other, cautiously.

"Your neck in a halter, Mr. Linton," said he, laughing ironically. "Ay, ye don't understand me—poor innocent that ye are! but I know what I'm saying, and I have good advice about it besides."

"How do you mean good advice, Tom?" said Linton, with seeming kindliness of manner. "Whom have you consulted?"

"One that knows the law well," said Tom, with all the evasive shrewdness of his class.

"And he tells you——"

"He tells me that the devil a bit betther off you'd be than myself—that you are what they call an 'accessary'—that's the word; I mind it well."

"And what does that mean?"

"A chap that plans the work, but hasn't the courage to put hand to it."

"That's an accessary, is it?" said the other, slowly.

"Just so. He paused for a few seconds, then added, "Besides, if

I was to turn 'prover, he says that *I*'d only be transported, and 'tis *you* would be hanged"—the last word was uttered in a harsh and grating tone, and followed by a laugh of insolent mockery—"so that you see 'tis betther be honest with me, and pay me my hire."

"You shall have it, by G——!" said Linton, with a deep vehemence; and, drawing a pistol from his bosom, he fired. The other fell, with a loud cry, to the bottom of the boat. A brief pause ensued, and then Linton raised the body in his arms to throw it over. A faint struggle showed that life was not extinct, but all resistance was impossible. The lightness of the boat, however, made the effort difficult; and it was only by immense exertion that he could even lift the heavy weight half way; and at last, when, by a great effort, he succeeded in laying the body over the gunwale, the boat lost its balance, and upset. With a bold spring, Linton dashed into the current, and made for shore; but almost as he did so, another and a stronger swimmer, who had thrown off his clothes for the enterprise, had reached the spot, and, grasping the inert mass as it was about to sink, swam with the bleeding body to the bank.

When Cashel gained the stairs, he threw the wounded man upon his shoulder, for signs of life were still remaining, and hastened to a cabaret near. A surgeon was soon procured, and the bullet was discovered to have penetrated the chest, cutting in its passage some large blood-vessel, from which the blood flowed copiously. That the result must be fatal it was evident; but as the bleeding showed signs of abatement, it seemed possible life might be protracted some hours. No time was therefore to be lost in obtaining the dying man's declaration, and a Juge d'Instruction, accompanied by a notary, was immediately on the spot. As the surgeon had surmised, a coagulum had formed in the wounded vessel, and, the bleeding being thus temporarily arrested, the man rallied into something like strength, and with a mind perfectly conscious and collected. To avoid the shock which the sight of Cashel might occasion, Roland did not appear at the bedside.

Nor need we linger either at such a scene, nor witness that fearful struggle between the hope of mercy and the dread consciousness of its all but impossibility. The dying confession has nothing new for the reader; the secret history of the crime is already before him, and it only remains to speak of those events which followed Keane's flight from Ireland. As Linton's servant he continued for years to travel about the Continent, constantly sustained by the hope that the price of his crime would one day be forthcoming, and as invariably put off by the excuse, that play, on which he entirely depended for means, had been unlucky, but that better times were certainly in store for him. The struggles and difficulties of an existence thus maintained; the terrible consciousness of an unexpiated crime; the

constant presence of one who knew the secret of the other, and might at any moment of anger, or in some access of dissipation, reveal it, made up a life of torture to which death would be a boon; added to this, that they frequently found themselves in the same city with Cashel, whom Linton never dared to confront. At Messina they fell in with Rica, as the proprietor of a gaming-table which Linton continually frequented. His consummate skill at play, his knowledge of life, and particularly the life of gamblers, his powers of agreeability, soon attracted Rica's notice, and an intimacy sprang up which became a close friendship—if such a league can be called by such a name.

By the power of an ascendancy acquired most artfully, and by persuasive flatteries of the most insidious kind, he induced Rica to bring Maritaña on the stage; where her immense success had replenished their coffers far more rapidly and abundantly than play. At Naples, however, an incident similar to what happened at Venice was nigh having occurred. She was recognised by a young Spaniard who had known her in Mexico; and as the whole assumed history of her noble birth and Sicilian origin was thus exposed to contradiction, they took measures to get rid of this unwelcome witness. They managed to hide among his effects some dies and moulds for coining—an offence then, as ever, rife at Naples. A police investigation, in which bribery had its share, was followed by a mock trial, and the young fellow was sentenced to the galleys for seven years, with hard labour.

Their career from this moment was one of unchanging success. Maritaña's beauty attracted to the play-table all that every city contained of fashion, wealth, and dissipation. In her ignorance of the world she was made to believe that her position was one the most exalted and enviable. The homage she received, the devotion exhibited on every side, the splendour of her life, her dress, her jewels, her liveries, dazzled and delighted her. The very exercise of her abilities was a source of enthusiastic pleasure to one who loved admiration. Nor had she, perhaps, awoke from this delusion, had not the heart-uttered cry of Roland burst the spell that bound her, and evoked the maiden's shame in her young heart. Then—with a revulsion that almost shook reason itself—she turned with abhorrence from a career associated with whatever could humiliate and disgrace. Entreaties, prayers, menaces—all were unavailing to induce her to appear again; and soon, indeed, her altered looks and failing health rendered it impossible. A vacant unmeaning smile, or a cold impassive stare, usurped the place of an expression that used to shine in joyous brilliancy. Her step, once bounding and elastic, became slow and uncertain. She seldom spoke; when she did, her accents were heavy, and her thoughts seemed languid, as though her mind was weary. None could have recognised in that wan and worn face, that frail and delicate figure, the proud and beautiful Maritaña.

She lived now in total seclusion. None ever saw her, save Rica, who used to come and sit beside her each day, watching, with Heaven alone knows what mixture of emotion! that wasting form and decaying cheek. What visions of ambition Linton might yet connect with her none knew or could guess; but he followed the changing fortunes of her health with an interest too deep and earnest to be mistaken for mere compassion. Such, then, was her sad condition when they repaired to Paris, and, in one of the most spacious hotels of the Rue Richelieu, established their "Bank of Rouge et Noir." This costly establishment vied in luxury and splendour with the most extravagant of those existing in the time of the Empire. All that fastidious refinement and taste could assemble, in objects of art and *virtù*, graced the *salons*. The cookery, the wines, the service of the different menials, rivalled the proudest households of the nobility.

A difficult etiquette restricted the admission to persons of acknowledged rank and station, and even these were banded together by the secret tie of a political purpose, for it was now the eve of that great convulsion which was to open once more in Europe the dread conflict between the masses and the few.

While Linton engaged deep in play, and still deeper in politics, "making his book," as he called it, "to win with whatever horse he pleased," one dreadful heartsore never left him: this was Keane, whose presence continually reminded him of the past, and brought up besides many a dread for the future.

It would have been easy at any moment for Linton to have disembarrassed himself of the man by a sum of money; but then came the reflection—"What is to happen when, with exhausted means and dissolute habits, this fellow shall find himself in some foreign country? Is he not likely, in a moment of reckless despair, to reveal the whole story of our guilt? Can I ever trust him in hours of convivial abandonment and debauch? Vengeance may, at any instant, overrule in such a nature the love of life—remorse may seize upon him. He is a Romanist, and may confess the murder, and be moved by his priest to bring home the guilt to the Protestant." Such were the motives which Linton never ceased to speculate on and think over, always reverting to the one same conviction, that he must keep the man close to his person, until the hour might come when he could rid himself of him for ever.

The insolent demeanour of the fellow—his ruffian assurance—the evidence of a power that he might wield at will—became at last intolerable. Linton saw this "shadow on his path" wherever he wandered. The evil was insupportable from the very fact that it occupied his thoughts when great and momentous events required them. It was like the paroxysm of some painful disease, that came at moments when health and calm of spirit were most wanted. To feel this, to

recognise it thoroughly, and to resolve to overcome it, were, with Linton, the work of a moment. "His hour is come," said he, at length; "the company at La Morgue to-morrow shall be graced by a guest of my inviting."

Although to a mind prolific in schemes of villany the manner of the crime could offer no difficulty, strange enough, his nature revolted against being himself the agent of the guilt. It was not fear, for he was a man of nerve and courage, and was, besides, certain to be better armed than his adversary. It was not pity, nor any feeling that bordered on pity, deterred him; it was some instinctive shrinking from an act of ruffianism; it was the blood of a man of birth that curdled at the thought of that which his mind associated with criminals of the lowest class—the conventional feeling of Honour surpassing all the dictates of common Humanity!

Nothing short of the pressing emergency of the hour could have overcome these scruples, but Keane's insolence was now in itself enough to compromise him, and Linton saw that but one remedy remained, and that it could not be deferred. Constant habits of intercourse with men of a dangerous class in the Faubourgs and the Cité gave the excuse for the boating excursion at night. The skiff was hired by Keane himself, who took up Linton at a point remote from where he started, and thus no clue could be traced to the person who accompanied him. The remainder is in the reader's memory, and now we pursue our story.

The surgeon who examined Keane's wound not only pronounced it inevitably fatal, but that the result must rapidly ensue. No time was, therefore, to be lost in obtaining the fullest revelations of the dying man, and also in taking the promptest measures to secure the guilty party.

The authorities of the British Embassy lent a willing aid to Cashel in this matter, and an express was at once despatched to London for the assistance of a police force, with the necessary warrant for Linton's arrest. Meanwhile Keane was watched with the narrowest vigilance, and so secretly was everything done, that his very existence was unknown beyond the precincts of the room he inhabited.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Vice has its own ambitions.
MORTON.

It was already nigh daybreak. The "Bank" had long since been closed, and none remained of Rica's guests save the most inveterate gamblers, who were now assembled in a small room in a secret part of the establishment, presided over by the host himself.

The persons here met were no bad representatives of the "play world," of which they formed an important part. They were men, many of them of the highest rank, who had no other object or pursuit in life than play! Mingling to a certain extent in public life, they performed before the world their various parts as soldiers, statesmen, courtiers, or ambassadors. Their thoughts meanwhile travelled but one solitary track. The only field in which their ambition ranged was the green cloth of the rouge et noir table. As soldiers they would have lost a battle with more fortitude than as gamblers they would lose a bet. As statesmen they would have risked the fate of a kingdom to secure a good "martingale" at play. Men of highest breeding, in society, abounding in all the graces that adorn intercourse; here, they were taciturn, reserved, almost morose, never suffering their attention to wander for an instant from that engrossing theme where gain and loss contended.

Into this society, noiseless and still as stifled feelings and repressed emotions could make it, Linton entered; a full dress replacing the clothes he so lately wore, not a trace of unusual agitation on his features, he seemed in every respect the easy man of fashion for which the world took him.

A slight nod—a familiar motion of the hand—were all the greetings which passed between him and such of his acquaintances as deigned to raise their heads from the game. Linton perceived at once that the play was high, nor did he need to cast a look at the mountain of gold, the coinage of every European nation, to know that the "Bank" was a winner. The chief player was a young noble of the King's household, the Duke de Marsac, a man of originally immense fortune, the greater part of which he had already squandered at play. His full dress of the Court, for he had dined the day before at the royal table, contrasted strangely with the haggard expression of his features, while his powdered hair hung in stray and dishevelled masses over his temples—even his deep lace ruffles, which in his agitation he had torn to very rags, all bespoke the abandonment of the

loser. Linton, who always passed for a mere frequenter of the house, unconnected with its interests in any way, saw at a glance that a perfectly quiet demeanour was imperatively necessary; that not a word should be uttered, not a syllable let fall, which should break the spell of that enchantment that was luring on the gambler to his ruin.

No man was more master of the hundred little artifices by which the spectator—"the gallery" is the play phrase—can arouse the hopes and stimulate the expectations of the losing player. He knew to perfection when to back the unlucky gambler, and how to throw out those half-muttered words of encouragement so dear and precious to the loser's heart. But if he knew all this well, he also knew that there are times when these interferences become impertinent, and when the intense excitement of the game will not admit of the distraction of sympathy. Linton, therefore, was silent; he took his seat behind the chair of one of his intimates, and watched the table attentively.

At the close of a game wherein fortune vacillated for a long time, the Duke lost above a hundred thousand francs—a kind of pause, like a truce, seemed to intervene, and Rica sat with the cards before him, not making preparations for a new deal.

"Fortune is too decidedly your enemy this evening, my Lord Duke; I am really ashamed to see you lose thus continuously."

"There is a certain Château de Marlier, which belongs to me, near St. Germain," said the Duke. "It has been valued, with its grounds, at upwards of seven hundred thousand francs; are you disposed to advance so much upon it?"

"As loan or purchase?" asked Rica.

"Whichever you prefer. If the choice were mine, I should say as a loan."

"Parbleu! it is a beautiful spot," said one of the players. "It was formerly a hunting seat of Louis XIV."

"You are quite correct, Sir," said the Duke. "It was a present from that monarch to my grandfather, and possesses, amongst its other advantages, the privilege of giving the owner a ducal coronet. If any man be weak enough in these days to care for the distinction, he can be Duke de Marlier on easy terms."

"Take him," whispered Linton in Rica's ear. "I accept the venture as my own."

"Were I to accept this offer, my Lord Duke," said Rica, "am I to understand that no mortgages nor charges of any kind are in existence against this property?"

"It is perfectly unencumbered," said the Duke, calmly. "There are some half-dozen pictures—a Velasquez or two amongst them—which I should reserve as my own; but everything else would belong to the purchaser."

"The cost of transferring property in France is considerable, I believe, and there is some difficulty respecting the right of foreigners to inherit," said Rica, again.

"Take him, I say; the risk is mine," whispered Linton, whose impatience at the other's caution became each moment stronger.

"Do you accept, Monsieur de Rica?" said the Duke, pushing back his chair from the table, as though about to rise, "or is there to be an armistice for the present?"

"It would be ungenerous, my Lord Duke, to refuse you anything in my power to grant," said Rica, obsequiously. "As a high-spirited but unfortunate player——"

"Let not this weigh with you, Sir," said the Duke, proudly; "the chances are that I leave my estate behind me on this table. That is the only consideration for you to entertain."

"Take him at once; it will be too late, soon," whispered Linton again.

"I agree, my Lord," said Rica, with a slight sigh, as if yielding in opposition to his inclination. "When is the money to be forthcoming?"

"Now, Sir. Here, upon this spot; here, where, before I rise, I am determined to have my revenge."

"The bank always closes at daybreak," said Rica, gravely.

"Upon this occasion it will not," said the Duke, with an air of command.

"Be it so, my Lord Duke; you shall have everything as you wish it. I only call these gentlemen to witness that this proceeding is contrary to my desire, and must form no precedent for the future."

"Few will be found to ask for such concession," said the Duke, tartly. "Let us have no more trifling, but begin."

"I back the Duke," said Linton, opening his pocket-book, and taking out a roll of bank-notes. "Whatever I have touched to-night has gone luckily with me, and I am sure to bring him good fortune."

"If I might ask a favour, Monsieur," said the Duke, "it would be to leave me to deal single-handed with my destiny."

"As you please, my Lord," said Linton, gaily. "If you will not accept me as ally, you must have me as adversary. Charley, make room for me beside you," continued he, addressing a man whose haggard cheek and deep sunken eye could scarcely recal the features of Lord Charles Frobisher.

"He's in for it," muttered Frobisher, as Linton seated himself at his side.

"We shall see," said Linton, calmly, arranging his note-book before him. Meanwhile, Rica was busily engaged in counting out to the Duke the heavy sum of the purchase. This occupied a considerable time, during which Linton amused the others with a running fire of

that gossipry which goes the round of Parisian society, and takes in the world of politics, of literature, of art, and of morals. The eventful period was full of rumours, and none knew better than Linton how to exalt some into certainty, and degrade others into mere absurdity. "If the bank wins," said he, laughingly, at the close of some observation on the condition of parties, "our friend Rica will be the last duke in Europe."

"Bah!" said an officer of the Royal Guard; "grape and canister are just as effectual as ever they were. There is nothing to be apprehended from the mob. Two battalions of infantry and a squadron of hussars will carry the 'ordinances,' if the ministry but give the order."

"I wish they would begin the game," said Frobisher, querulously, for he took no interest in any topic but that of play.

"Has any one given orders that the doors shall be close-barred and locked?" said another. "The police will be here presently."

"What should bring the police here, Sir?" said Linton, turning suddenly towards the speaker with a look of almost insolent defiance.

"They are making perquisitions everywhere the last few days," said the youth, abashed by the tone and manner of the question.

"Ah! so they are—very true. I beg your pardon," cried Linton, affecting a smile. "We are so intent upon our game here, that one actually forgets what is occurring in the greater game that is playing without."

"If there's to be no more play I'm off to bed," yawned Frobisher, as he stretched himself along the chairs. A group had meanwhile gathered round a table where refreshments and wine were laid out, and were invigorating themselves for the coming campaign.

"I remember the last *séance* with closed doors I assisted at," said a handsome middle-aged man, with a grey moustache, and short-cut grey hair, "was in the stable at Fontainebleau. We played for seventeen hours, and when we separated we discovered that the Empire was at an end, and the Emperor departed!"

"We might do something of the same kind now, Blancharde," said another; "it would be no difficult matter, I fancy, to play an old Dynasty out and a new one in at this moment."

"Hush, Rozlan! Marsac is not one 'of us,'" whispered the former, cautiously.

"He's going the shortest way to become so, notwithstanding. Nothing enlarges the sphere of political vision like being ruined! One always becomes liberal, in the political sense, when it is impossible to be so in any other!"

The chatting now turned on the events that were then impending, a great diversity of opinion existing as to whether the King would insist upon carrying the "ordinances," and a still wider divergence

as to what result would follow. During this discussion, Frobisher's impatience went beyond all control, and at last he rose, declaring that he would remain no longer.

"You forget that the doors are locked for twenty-four hours, Sir," said another, "and neither can any one leave nor enter the room before that time."

"We are more sacred than a privy council or a chapter of the knights of St. Louis," said Rozlan.

"Now then to see who is the next Duc de Marlier!" whispered Linton in Rica's ear. "Let us begin."

"One word with you, Linton," whispered Rica; "don't bet high, it distracts my attention—make a mere game of amusement, for this will be a hard struggle, and it must be the last."

"So I perceive," rejoined Linton; "events are coming fast; we must be off ere the tide overtake us."

"The game, the game!" cried Frobisher, striking the table with his rake.

"And Maritaña?" whispered Linton, holding Rica by the arm.

The other grew lividly pale, and his lip quivered as he said, "Is this the time, Linton——"

"It is the very time," rejoined the other, determinedly, "and I will have my answer now. You cannot equivocate with me."

"I do not seek to do so. I have told you always what I tell you still—I cannot coerce her."

"There will be no need. This dukedom will do the business. I know her well—better than you do. See, they are watching us yonder. Say the word at once—it is agreed."

"Hear me, Linton——"

"I'll hear nothing; save the one word, 'agreed.'"

"Let me but explain——"

"There is nothing to explain. The betrothal you allude to is—as none knows better than yourself—an idle ceremony; and if she loves the fellow, so much the more urgent are the reasons for my request. Be quick, I say."

"If she consent——"

"She shall. My Lord Duke, a thousand pardons, I beg, for this delay; but Rica has been tormenting me these ten minutes by the refusal of a petty favour. He is become reasonable at last; and now for the combat!"

The party seated themselves like men about to witness an exciting event; and, although each had his venture on the game, the Duke was the great object of interest, and speculation was high as to how the struggle was to end.

It is no part of our object to follow the changing fortunes of that long contest, nor watch the vacillating chances which, alternately,

elevated to hope and lowered to very desperation. Before the day began to dawn, every player, save the Duke, had ceased to bet. Some, worn out and exhausted, had sunk to sleep upon the rich ottomans; others, drinking deep of champagne, seemed anxious to forget everything. Frobisher, utterly ruined, sat in the same place at the table, mechanically marking the game, on which he had no longer a stake, and muttering exclamations of joy or disappointment at imaginary gains and losses, for he still fancied that he was betting large sums, and participating in all the varying emotions of a gambler's life.

The luck of the bank continued. Play how he would, boldly "back the colour," or try to suit the fitful fortunes of the game, the Duke went on losing.

Were such an ordeal one to evoke admiration, it could scarcely be withheld from him, who, with an unwearied brain and unbroken temper, sat patiently there, fighting foot to foot, contesting every inch of ground, and, even in defeat, preserving the calm equanimity of his high breeding. Behind his chair stood Linton—a flush of triumph on his cheek as he continued to behold the undeviating course of luck that attended the bank. "Another deal like that," muttered he, "and I shall quarter the arms of Marlier with Linton."

The words were scarcely uttered, when a deep sigh broke from the Duke—it was the first that had escaped him—and he buried his head between his hands. Rica looked over at Linton, and a slight, almost imperceptible, motion of his eyebrows signalled that the battle was nigh over.

"Well! how is the game? Am I betting?—what's the colour?" said the Duke, passing his clammy hand across his brow.

"I am waiting for you, my Lord Duke," said Rica, obsequiously.

"I'm ready—quite ready," cried the other. "Am I the only player? I fancied that some others were betting. Where's my Lord Charles!—ah! I see him. And Mr. Linton—is he gone?"

"He has just left the room, my Lord Duke. Will you excuse me if I follow him for an instant?" And at the same moment Rica arose, and left the chamber with hasty steps.

It was at the end of a long corridor, tapping gently at a door, Linton stood, as Rica came up.

"What! is't over already?" said Linton, with a look of angry impatience.

"This is not fair, Linton!" said Rica, endeavouring to get nearest to the door.

"What is not fair?" said the other, imperiously. "You told me a while ago that she must pronounce, herself, upon her own future. Well, I am willing to leave it to that issue."

"But she is unfit to do so at present," said Rica, entreatingly. "You know well how unsettled is her mind, and how wandering are

her faculties. There are moments when she scarcely knows *me*—her father."

"It is enough if she remember *me*," said Linton, insolently. "Her intellects will recover—the cloud will pass away; and, if it should not, still—as my wife, it is an object I have set my heart on; and so, let me pass."

"I cannot—I will not peril her chances of recovery by such a shock," said Rica, firmly; then changing suddenly, he spoke in accents of deep feeling: "Remember, Linton, how I offered you *her* whom you acknowledged you preferred. I told you the means of coercion in my power, and pledged myself to use them. It was but two days since I discovered where they were; to-morrow we will go there together. I will claim her as my daughter: the laws of France are imperative in the matter. Mary Leicester shall be yours."

"I care for her no longer," said Linton, haughtily. "I doubt, indeed, if I ever cared for her. She is not one to suit my fortunes. Maritaña is, or at least may become so."

"Be it so, but not now, Linton; the poor child's reason is clouded."

"When she hears she is a Duchess," said Linton, half sneeringly, "it will dispel the gloomy vapour."

"I implore you—I entreat—on my knees I beg of you——" said the distracted father, and, unable to utter more, he sank powerless at Linton's feet; meanwhile the other opened the door, and, stepping noiselessly over the prostrate figure, entered the room.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Like a bold criminal he stood,
Calm in his guilt.

THE FORGER.

WITH firm step and head high, Linton entered a room where the dim half-light of the closed jalousies made each object indistinct. He halted for an instant, to cast a searching glance around, and then advanced to a door at the farthest end of the apartment; at this he tapped twice gently with his knuckles. He waited for an instant, and then repeated his summons. Still no answer, even though he rapped a third time, and louder than before. Linton now turned the handle noiselessly, and opened the door. For a moment or two he seemed uncertain whether to advance or retire; but his resolution was soon made—he entered and closed the door behind him.

The chamber in which Linton now stood was smaller than the

outer one, and equally shaded from the strong sunlight. His eyes were now, however, accustomed to the dusky half-light, and he was able to mark the costly furniture and splendid ornaments of the room. The walls were hung with rose-coloured damask, over which a drapery of white lace was suspended, looped up at intervals to admit of small brackets of bronze, on which stood either "statuettes" or vases of rare "Sèvres." At a toilet-table in the middle of the room were laid out the articles of a lady's dressing-case, but of such costly splendour that they seemed too gorgeous for use. Trinkets and jewellery of great value were scattered carelessly over the table, and an immense diamond cross glittered from the mother-o'-pearl frame of the looking-glass.

The half-open curtains at the end of the room showed a marble bath, into which the water flowed from a little cascade of imitation rustic, its tiny ripple murmuring in the still silence of the room. There was another sound, still softer and more musical than that, there—the long-drawn breathing of a young girl, who, with her face upon her arm, lay asleep upon a sofa. With stealthy step and noiseless gesture, Linton approached and stood beside her. He was not one to be carried away by any enthusiasm of admiration, and yet he could not look upon the faultless symmetry of that form, the placid beauty of that face, on which a passing dream had left a lingering smile, and not feel deeply moved. In her speaking moments, her dark and flashing eyes often lent a character of haughty severity to her handsome features; now, their dark lashes shrouded them, and the expression of the face was angelic in sweetness. The olive-darkness of her skin, too, was tempered by the half-light, while the slight tinge of colour on her cheek might have vied with the petal of a rose. Linton drew a chair beside the sofa, and sat down. With folded arms, and head slightly bent forward, he watched her, while his fast-hurrying thoughts travelled miles and miles—speculating, planning, contriving—meeting difficulties here—grasping advantages there—playing over a game of life, and thinking if an adversary could find a flaw in it.

"She is worthy to be a Duchess," said he, as he gazed at her. "A Duchess!—and what more?—that is the question. Ah, these women, these women! if they but knew their power! If they but knew how all the boldest strivings of our intellects are as nothing compared to what their beauty can effect! Well, well; it is better that they should not. They are tyrants as it is—petty tyrants—to all who care for them; and he who does not is their master. *That* is the real power—there the stronghold—and how they fear the man who takes his stand behind it!—how they crouch and tremble before him! —what fascinating graces do they reserve for *him*, that they would not bestow upon a lover! Is it that they only love where they fear? How beautiful she looks, and how calmly sweet!—it is the sleeping

tigress, notwithstanding. And now to awake her: it is a pity, too; that wearied mind wants repose, and the future gives but little promise of it."

He bent down over her, till he almost touched the silken masses of her long dark hair, and, in a low, soft voice, said:

"Maritaña—Maritaña."

"No, no, no," said she, in the low, muttering accents of sleep, "not here—not here!"

"And why not here, dearest?" said he, catching at the words.

A faint shudder passed over her, and she gathered her shawl more closely around her.

"Hace mal tiempo—the weather looks gloomy,"—said she, in a faint voice.

"And if not here, Maritaña, where then?" said he, in a low tone.

"In our own deep forests, beneath the liana and the cedar; where the mimosa blossoms, and the acacia scents the air; where fountains are springing, and the glow-worm shines like a star in the dark grass. Oh, not here! not here!" cried she, plaintively.

"Then in Italy, Maritaña mia, where all that the tropics can boast is blended with whatever is beautiful in art; where genius goes hand-in-hand with nature; and where life floats calmly on, like some smooth-flowing river, unruffled and unbroken."

A faint low sigh escaped her, and her lips parted with a smile of surpassing loveliness.

"Yes, dearest—there with me, beside the blue waters of the Adriatic, or lost amid the chesnut forests of the Apennines. Think of those glorious cities, too, where the once great still live, enshrined by memory, in their own palace walls. Think of Venice——"

The word was not well uttered when, with a shrill scream, she started up and awoke.

"Who spoke to me of my shame? Who spoke of Venice?" cried she, in accents of wild terror.

"Be calm, Maritaña. It was a dream—nothing but a dream," said Linton, pressing her gently down again. "Do not think more of it."

"Where am I?" said she, drawing a long breath.

"In your own dressing-room, dearest," said he, in an accent of deep devotion.

"And you, Sir? Why are *you* here? and by what right do you address me thus?"

"By no right," said Linton, with a submissive deference which well became him. "I can plead nothing save the devotion of a heart long since your own, and the good wishes of your father, Maritaña, who bade me speak to you."

"I will not believe it, Sir," said she, proudly, as she arose and

walked the room with stately step. "I know but too well the influence you wield over him, although I cannot tell how it is acquired. I have seen your counsels sway, and your wishes guide him, when my entreaties were unheard and unheeded. Tell me nothing, then, of his permission."

"Let me speak of that better reason, where my heart may plead, Maritaña. It was to offer you a share in my fortunes that I have come here—to place at your feet whatever I possess in rank, in station, and in future hope—to place you where your beauty and your fascinations entitle you to shine—a Peeress of the Court of France—a Duchess, of a name only second to Royalty itself."

The girl's dark eyes grew darker, and her flushed cheek grew crimson, as with heaving bosom she listened. "A Duchess!" murmured she, between her lips.

"La Duchesse de Marlier," repeated Linton, slowly, while his keen eyes were riveted on her.

"And this real—not a pageant—not as that thing you made of me before?"

"La Duchesse de Marlier," said Linton, again, "knows of no rank above her own, save in the Blood Royal. Her château was the present of a king—her grounds are worthy of such a donor."

"And the Duke de Marlier," said she, with a look of ineffable irony, "who is to play *him?* Is that part reserved for Mr. Linton?"

"Could he not look the character?" said Linton, putting on a smile of seeming good humour, while his lip trembled with passion.

"Look it—ay, that could he; and if looks would suffice, he could be all that his ambition aims at."

"You doubt my sincerity, Maritaña," said he, sorrowfully; "have I ever given you cause to do so?"

"Never," cried she, impetuously. "I read you from the first hour I saw you. You never deceived *me*. *My* training has not been like that of others of my sex and age, amidst the good, the virtuous, and the pure. It was the corrupt, the base-born, and the abandoned offered their examples to my eyes: the ruined gambler, the beggared adventurer—*their* lives were my daily study. How, then, should I not recognise one so worthy of them all?"

"This is less than fair, Maritaña; you bear me a grudge for having counselled that career wherein your triumphs were unbounded; and now you speak to me harshly for offering a station a princess might accept without a derogation."

"Tell me not of my triumphs," said she, passionately; "they were my shame! You corrupted me, by trifling with my ignorance of the world. I did not know then, as now I know, what were the prizes of that ambition I cherished! But *you* knew them; *you* speculated on them, as now you speculate upon others. Ay, blush for it; let your

cheek glow, and sear your cold heart for the infamy The coroneted Duchess would have been a costlier merchandise than the wreathed dancer! Oh, shame upon you!—shame upon you! Could you not be satisfied with your gambler's cruelty, and ruin those who have manhood's courage to sustain defeat, but that you should make your victim a poor, weak, motherless girl, whose unprotected life might have evoked even *your* pity?"

"I will supplicate no longer; upon you be it, if the alternative be heavy. Hear me, young lady. It is by your father's consent—nay, more, at his desire—that I make you the proffer of my name and rank. He is in my power—not his fortune, nor his future prospects, but his very life is in my hands. You shudder at having been a dancer: think of what you may be—the daughter of a forçat, a galley-slave! If these be idle threats, ask himself; he will tell you if I speak truly. It is my ambition that you should share my title and my fortune. I mean to make your position one that the proudest would envy; reject my offer if you will, but never reproach me with what your own blind folly has accomplished."

Maritaña stood with clasped hands, and eyes wildly staring on vacancy, as Linton, in a voice broken with passion, uttered these words:

"I will not press you, now, Maritaña; you shall have to-night to think over all I have said; to-morrow you will give me your answer."

"To-morrow?" muttered she, after him.

"Who is there?" said Linton, as a low, faint knock was heard at the door. It was repeated, and Linton approached and opened the door. A slight gesture of the hand was all that he could perceive in the half-light; but he understood it, and passed out, closing the door noiselessly behind him.

"Well?" said Rica, as he grasped the other's arm—"well?"

"Well," echoed Linton, peevishly, "she is in her most insolent of moods, and affects to think that all the splendour I have offered her is but the twin of the mock magnificence of the stage. She is a fool, but she'll think better of it, or she must be taught to do so."

Rica sighed heavily, but made no answer; at last he said,

"It is over with the Duke, and he bears it well."

"Good blood always does," said Linton. "Your men of birth have a lively sense of how little they have done for their estates, and therefore part with them with a proportionate degree of indifference. Where is he?"

"Writing letters in the boudoir off the drawing-room. You must see him, and ask when the necessary papers can be signed and exchanged."

Linton walked on, and passing through the play-room, around which

in every attitude of slumber the gamblers lay, entered the boudoir, before a table in which the Duke de Marsac was busy writing.

"Fortune has still been obdurate, my Lord Duke, I hear," said he, entering softly.

The Duke looked up, and his pale features were totally devoid of all emotion as he said,

"I have lost heavily, Sir."

"I am sincerely grieved to hear it; as an old sufferer in the same field, I can feel for others." A very slight movement of impatience on the Duke's part showed that he regarded the sympathy as obtrusive. Linton saw this, and went on: "I would not have invaded your privacy to say as much, my Lord Duke, but I thought it might be satisfactory to you to learn that your ancient dukedom—the château of your proud ancestors—is not destined to fall into plebeian hands, nor suffer the indignity of their profanation. I mean to purchase the property from Rica myself."

"Indeed!" said the Duke, carelessly, as though the announcement had no interest for him.

"I had fancied, my Lord, this information would have given you pleasure," said Linton, with evident irritation of manner.

"No, Sir," said the other, languidly, "I am ashamed to say I cannot appreciate the value of these tidings."

"Can the contract and transfer be speedily made out?" said Linton, abruptly.

"Of course; there shall be no delay in the matter. I will give orders to my 'Notaire' at once."

"And where shall you be found to-morrow, my Lord Duke, in case we desire to confer with you?"

The Duke grew lividly pale, and he arose slowly from his chair, and, taking Linton's arm, drew him towards a window in silence. Linton saw well that some new train of thought had suddenly sprung up, and wondered what could so instantaneously have wrought this change in his manner.

"You ask me, Sir," said the Duke, with a slow emphasis on every word, "where am I to be found to-morrow? Is not Mr. Linton's knowledge of Paris sufficient to suggest the answer to that question?" There was a fierce boldness in the way these words were uttered Linton could not comprehend, any more than he understood what they might mean.

"I must plead ignorance, my Lord Duke. I really discredit the eulogium you have pronounced upon my information."

"Then I will tell you, Sir," said the Duke, speaking in a low thick whisper, while his dark eyes glared with the fire of intense excitement. "You will find me in the SEINE!"

Linton staggered back as if he had been struck, and a pallor spread

over his features, making the very lips bloodless. "How do you mean, Sir? Why do you dare to say this to *me?*" said he, in a voice broken and guttural.

"Since none should better know how to appreciate the news," was the cold answer.

Linton trembled from head to foot, and, casting a wary look around on every side to see that they were alone, he said, "These words may mean much, or they may mean nothing—at least nothing that has concern for me. Now, Sir, be explicit: in what sense am I to read them?"

The Duke looked astonished at the emotion which all the other's self-command could not repress; he saw, too, that he had touched a secret spring of conscience, and with a calm reserve he said, "Take what I have said in the sense your own heart now suggests, and I venture to affirm it will be the least pleasing interpretation you can put upon it!"

"You shall give me satisfaction for this, Sir," said Linton, whose passion now boiled over. "I will not endure the tyranny of insinuations from any man. Here, before you quit the house—if ever you quit it—I will have full satisfaction for your insolence."

"Insolence!" cried the Duke.

"Yes, insolence. I repeat the word, and these gentlemen shall hear a still stronger word addressed to you, if that will not suffice to arouse your courage."

This speech was now directed to the crowd of gamblers, who, suddenly awakened by the loud talking, rushed in a body into the room.

Questions, and demands for explanation, pressed on every hand, their countrymen gathering round the antagonists on either side, both of whom maintained for some minutes a perfect silence. The Duke was the first to speak. "Gentlemen," said he, "you have heard an expression addressed to me which no Frenchman listens to without inflicting chastisement on the speaker—I do not ask—I do not care in the least—who this person may be—what his rank and position in life; I am ready to admit him to the fullest equality with myself. It only remains that I should satisfy myself of certain doubts, which his own manner has originated. It may be that he cannot call *me*, or any other gentleman, to account for his words."

Linton's face twitched with short convulsive jerks as he listened, and then, crossing the room to where the Duke stood, he struck him with his glove across the face, while, with a very shout of passion, he uttered the one word—"Coward!" The scene became now one of the wildest confusion. The partisanship of country surrounded either with a group, who in loud tones expressed their opinions, and asked for explanations of what had occurred. That some gross insult had

been put upon Linton was the prevailing impression; but how originating, or of what nature, none knew, nor did the principals seem disposed to afford the information.

"I tell you, Frobisher," said Linton, angrily, "it is a matter does not admit of explanation."

"Parbleu, Sir! you have placed it out of the reach of such," said an old French officer, "and I trust you will feel the consequences."

The chaos of tongues, loud in altercation and dispute, now burst forth again, some asserting that the cause of quarrel should be openly declared at once, others averring that the opprobrious epithet applied by Linton to the Duke effectually debarred negotiation, and left no other arbitrament than the pistol. In the midst of this tumult, where angry passions were already enlisted, and insolent rejoinders passed from mouth to mouth, a still louder uproar was now heard in the direction of the *salon*, and the crash of a breaking door, and the splintering noise of the shattered wood, overtopped the other sounds.

"The Commissaire de Police!" cried some one, and the words were electric. The hours of play were illegal—the habits of the house such as to implicate all in charges, more or less disgraceful—and immediately a general rush was made for escape—some seeking the well-known private issues from the apartment, others preparing for a bold attempt to force their passage through the armed followers of the Commissary.

Every avenue of escape had been already occupied by the gendarmes; and the discomfited gamblers were seen returning into the room crest-fallen and ashamed, when the Commissary, followed by a knot of others in plain clothes, advancing into the middle of the chamber, pronounced the legal form of arrest on all present.

"I am a Peer of France," said the Duke de Marsac, haughtily. "I yield to no authority that does not carry the signature of my Sovereign."

"You are free, Monsieur le Duc," said the Commissary, bowing respectfully.

"I am an English gentleman," said Linton, stepping forward. "I demand by what right you presume to detain me in custody?"

"What is your name, Sir?" asked the Commissary.

"Linton!" was the brief reply.

"That's the man," whispered a voice from behind the Commissary, and, at the same instant, that functionary approached, and laying his hand on the other's shoulder, said:

"I arrest you, Sir, on the charge of murder."

"Murder!" repeated Linton, with a sneer that he could not merge into a laugh. "This is a sorry jest, Sir."

"You will find it sad earnest!" said a deep voice.

Linton turned round, and straight in front of him stood Roland

Cashel, who, with bent brows and compressed lips, seemed struggling to repress the passion that worked within him.

"I say, Frobisher, are you omitted in the indictment?" cried Linton, with a sickly attempt to laugh; "or has our buccaneering friend forgotten to stigmatise *you* for the folly of having known him?"

"He is in *my* custody," said a gruff English voice, in reply to some observation of the Commissary; and a short, stout-built man made a gesture to another in the crowd to advance.

"What! is this indignity to be put upon me?" said Linton, as he saw the handcuffs produced, and prepared to be adjusted to his wrists. "Is the false accusation of a pirate and a slaver to expose me to the treatment of a convicted felon?"

"I will do my duty, Sir," said the police officer, steadily. "If I do more, my superiors can hear of it. Tom, put on the irons."

"Is this your vengeance, Sir?" said Linton, as he cast a look of ineffable hate towards Cashel; but Roland made no reply, as he stood regarding the scene with an air of saddest meaning.

"You knew him better than I did, Charley," said Linton, sneeringly, "when you black-balled him at the Yacht Club; but the world shall know him better yet than either of us—mean-spirited scoundrel that he is."

"Come away, Sir," said the officer, as he placed himself on one side of his prisoner, his fellow doing the same at the other.

"Not till I see your warrant," said Linton, resolutely.

"There it is, Sir, all reg'lar," said the man; "signed by the Secretary of State, and attested by the witness."

"The rascality is well got up," said Linton, trying to laugh, "but by Heaven they shall pay for it!" These words were directed to where Roland stood, and uttered with a concentrated hate that thrilled through every heart around.

As Linton was led forth, the Commissary proceeded to arrest the different individuals present on the charge of gambling in secret. In the midst of the group was Rica, standing pale with terror, and overcome by the revelations he had listened to.

"I will be responsible for this gentleman's appearance," said Cashel, addressing the Commissary. "There is no need to subject him to the insult of an arrest."

"He can only be liberated by a bail bond in presence of the Judge, Sir. You can accompany me to the Court, and enter into the recognisances, if you will."

"Be it so," said Cashel, bowing.

Rica made a sign for Roland to approach him. He tried to speak, but his voice was inarticulate from faintness, and the only audible sound was the one word "Maritaña."

"Where?" said Cashel, eagerly.

Rica nodded in the direction of a small door that led from the chamber, and Cashel made a gesture of assent in answer.

With headlong speed Roland traversed the corridor, and entered the ante-chamber at the end of it. One glance showed him that the room was empty, and he passed on into the chamber where so lately Linton had spoken with Maritaña. This, too, was deserted, as was the bedroom which opened into it. Hastening from place to place, he called her name aloud, but no answer came. Terrified by a hundred fears, for he well knew the rash, impetuous nature of the girl, Roland entreated, in tones of wildest passion, "that she might come forth—that her friends were all around her, and nothing more to fear." But no voice replied, and when the sound of his own died away, all was silent. The window of the dressing-room was open, and as Roland looked from it into the street beneath, his eye caught the fragment of a dress adhering to the hook of the "jalousie." It was plain now she had made her escape in this manner, and that she was gone.

Too true! Overcome by terror—her mind distracted by fears of Linton—without one to succour or protect her, she had yielded to the impulse of her dread, and leaped from the window! That small rag of fluttering gauze was all that remained of Maritaña.

Rica was to hear these sad tidings as he was led away by the Commissary, but he listened to them like one whose mind was stunned by calamity. A few low murmuring words alone escaped him, and they indicated that he felt everything which was happening as a judgment upon him for his own crimes.

Even in his examination before the judge, these half-uttered self-accusings broke forth, and he seemed utterly indifferent as to what fate awaited him. By Cashel's intervention, and the deposit of a large sum as bail for Rica's future appearance, his liberation was effected, and he was led away from the spot unconscious of all around him.

As Cashel assisted the weak and tottering man through the crowded passages of the court, he felt his arm gently touched by a hand, at the same instant that his name was uttered. He turned hastily, and saw at his side a woman, who, youthful and still handsome, bore in her appearance the signs of deep poverty and still deeper sorrow. Her dress had once been rich, but now, from time and neglect, was disfigured and shabby; her veil, partly drawn across her face, was torn and ragged, and her very shoes were in tatters. A more sad-looking object it were difficult to conceive, and in the hurried glance Roland bestowed upon her, at a moment when all his thoughts were intent upon other cares, he believed that she was one entreating charity. Hastily drawing forth his purse, he offered her

some money, but she drew proudly up, saying, "This is insult, Sir, and I have not deserved it."

Cashel started with amazement, and drawing closer, stared eagerly at her.

"Great Heaven!" cried he "is this possible? Is this——"

"Hush!" cried she. "Let me not hear my name—or what was once my name—spoken aloud. I see now—you did not know me, nor would I have brought myself to the shame of being recognised but for *his* sake. *He* is now before the tribunal, and will be sent to prison for want of bail."

Cashel motioned to her not to leave the spot; and having safely placed Rica in his carriage, returned to the court.

By the guarantee of his name, and the offer of any moneyed security which might be required, Cashel obtained permission for Lord Charles Frobisher to go free; and then hurrying outside, communicated the tidings to her who stood trembling with fear and anxiety.

With tearful eyes, and in a voice broken by sobs, she was uttering her thanks as Lord Charles joined them.

"This, then, was *your* doing?" said he, staring coldly at her.

"Say, rather, it was your own, my Lord," said Cashel, sternly.

"Oh, Charles! thank him—thank him," cried she, hysterically. "Friends have not been so plentiful with us, that we can treat them thus!"

"Lady Charles is most grateful, Sir," said Frobisher, with a cold sneer. "I am sure the show of feeling she evinces must repay all your generosity." And, with this base speech, he drew her arm within his, and moved hastily away. One look towards Cashel, as she turned to go, told more forcibly than words the agony of her broken heart.

And this was the once gay, light-hearted girl—the wild and daring romp, whose buoyant spirit seemed above every reverse of fortune. Poor Jemima Meek! she had run away from her father's home to link her lot with a gambler! Some play transaction, in which his name was involved, compelled him to quit the service, and at last the country. Now, depending for support upon his family, now, hazarding his miserable means at play, he had lived a life of recklessness and privation—nothing left to him of his former condition, save the name that he had brought down to infamy!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"The end of all."

What a contrast did Roland Cashel's life now present to the purposeless vacuity of his late existence! Every hour was occupied; even to a late period of each night was he engaged by cares which seemed to thicken around him as he advanced.

We should but weary our reader were we to follow him in the ceaseless round of duties which hard necessity imposed. Each morning his first visit was to the hospital of St. Louis, where Keane still lay, weakly struggling against a malady whose fatal termination was beyond a doubt; and although Roland could not wish for the prolongation of a life which the law would demand in expiation, he felt a craving desire that the testimony of the dying man should be full and explicit on every point, and that every dubious circumstance should be explained ere the grave closed over him.

To seek for Maritaña, to endeavour to recover this poor forlorn girl, was his next care, and to this end he spared nothing. Whatever money could purchase, or skill and unwearied enterprise suggest, were all employed in the search. Rica, whose nature seemed totally changed by the terrible shock of Linton's culpability, gave himself up implicitly to Cashel's guidance, and was unceasing in his efforts to discover his missing child. But with all the practised acuteness of the police at their command, and all the endeavours which their zeal could practise, the search was fruitless, and not a trace of her could be detected.

Through the Neapolitan Embassy, orders were transmitted to Naples to inquire into the case of Enrique, whose innocence the testimony of Keane went far to establish. The result was, as Cashel ardently hoped, his complete vindication, and a telegraphic despatch brought tidings that he was already liberated, and on his way to Paris. While both Roland and Rica waited impatiently for the arrival of one whose assistance in their search would be so valuable, the most perfect good understanding grew up between them, and Cashel began to perceive how, beneath the vices which a life of reckless debauchery had created, there lay—inactive and unused for many a day—kindly feelings and warm affections for which he had never given him credit. As this confidence grew stronger, Rica became more frank and open in all his intercourse, and at last revealed to

Cashel the whole story of his life—a strange, eventful history, whose vicissitudes were the changing fortunes of a gambler's existence. For such was he—without a passion, a pursuit of any kind but play, he had passed his life in that one baneful vice. For it he had toiled and laboured: to indulge that passion he had engaged in deadly duels, and perilled his life by acts of forgery.

His marriage with Corrigan's daughter was brought about solely to procure the means of play; nor was there an energy of his mind or an impulse of his nature had any other direction. Linton's skill as a gambler—the unceasing resources he seemed to possess—the stratagems and devices he could deploy—created for him, in Rica's mind, a species of admiration that soon degenerated into a blind submission to all his dictates. Such an ally as this, so deeply versed in all the weak points of his fellow-men—so thoroughly master of every impulse that moves—of every hope and fear that sways the gambler's nature—had been the cherished desire of his heart for many a year, and now Fortune had at last given him such an associate. Their sudden success seemed to warrant the justice of the hope. Everything prospered with them since their new league. If he did not gain an equal ascendancy over the daughter's mind as he had acquired over the father's, still the ambitious future he often pictured before her dazzled and delighted her, and thus, ere long, he contrived to obtain a degree of power, although of different kinds, over both. From such an associate as Linton concealment was impossible; and Rica soon saw himself completely at the mercy of a man who had sifted every motive of his heart, and weighed every action of his life, and at last became his pitiless, tyrannical master.

Rica's connexion with Corrigan suggested to Linton's inventive mind the possibility of succeeding to that estate for which already he had perilled so much. His plan was to obtain from Corrigan a full renunciation of his claim to the property, and then to take the necessary steps to investigate the long dormant title. All their efforts to discover the old man's residence were, however, vain; for although they once obtained a clue to the fact, some information seemed to have apprised the others of their danger, and their abode was immediately changed.

It was with a strange thrill of mingled pain and pleasure Cashel heard Rica speak of his daughter Mary—of her he had deserted for so many a year, and yet now yearned towards with an affection that sprang from his self-accusings. The terrible chastisement his own vices had inflicted on his lonely and deserted lot seemed never absent from his thoughts; and he would sit for hours silently, while the heavy tears rolled along his furrowed cheeks, and his strong, heaving bosom showed his agony.

The fruitlessness of their search after Maritaña in Paris, and the death of Tom Keane in the hospital, removed the only obstacles to their departure from that city; and Rica and Cashel, who now felt their fortunes bound up together, prepared to take their leave of Paris. The trial of Linton was to take place in Limerick, and thither Roland was summoned by the law officers of the Crown. This sad duty accomplished, he was to accompany Rica to Columbia, whither some slight hope of recovering Maritaña induced him to proceed. As for Cashel, once in the old haunts of childhood, he had resolved never to quit them more.

Roland's arrangements for departure were soon made, and he repaired to the Embassy, where he had been invited to breakfast on the last morning of his stay. There was a certain bustle and movement in the court-yard which attracted his attention; and he saw two travelling-carriages, with an attendant "fourgon," surrounded by servants, and loaded with all the preparations for a long journey.

"You have come in time, Mr. Cashel," said the Ambassador, as he shook hands with him, "to see our new Minister at Florence, who is now on his way thither; and what will have more interest in your eyes, a very pretty girl, who has become the great literary character of our circles here. I regret much that she is about to leave us."

Cashel bowed politely, but with the cold indifference of one for whom the tidings had no peculiar interest, and accompanied the Ambassador into a *salon*, crowded with company.

"I have a young countryman to present to you, my Lord," said his Excellency, leading Cashel forward, "who I trust will wear a less sombre face in the sunny south than he has done in our northern latitudes. Mr. Roland Cashel—Lord Kilgoff."

A sudden start of surprise was made by both, and Roland stood mute and thunderstruck as Lord Kilgoff advanced towards him with extended hand, and said:

"Yes, Mr. Cashel, your old friend in better health and spirits than when last you saw him; and better able to thank you for much hospitality, and apologise for much injustice."

"Let me have my share in both acknowledgments," said Lady Kilgoff, rising, and taking Cashel's hand with much cordiality.

Roland tried to mutter a few words, but he could not succeed; and his eyes ranged about the chamber till they fell upon one who, pale and motionless, regarded him with a look of most expressive sadness.

"Miss Leicester, too, here?" said he, at last.

"Yes, Mr. Cashel," said Lady Kilgoff; "chance is about to do for us, what all our skill would have failed in. Here are two worthy people who will not hear your name mentioned, and who now must consent, not alone to hear, but see you in person. I am quite con-

vinced you never did or could have injured them. Stand forward, Mr. Corrigan, and make your charge."

"I will save that gentleman the pain of accusing me," said Roland, with deep emotion. "I have injured him deeply, but yet unwittingly. I have long desired this meeting, to place in his hands a document I have never ceased to carry about me—the title to a property of which I was not the rightful owner, and which is his—and his only."

"I will not, I cannot accept of it, Sir," said Corrigan, proudly. "I will never see that cottage more."

"I do not speak of 'the Cottage,'" said Cashel, "but of the whole estate of Tubbermore, the ancient possession of your house—still yours. There is the proof." And, as he spoke, he drew forth the pardon, and handed it to Corrigan.

The old man trembled in every limb as he perused the paper, which he now read over for the third time.

"A royal pardon to Miles Corrigan, my grandfather!" exclaimed he, gasping for breath; "and how came you by this, Sir?"

"The story is soon told," said Cashel, relating in a few words the singular steps of the discovery.

"And you have travelled throughout Europe for upwards of three years to disencumber yourself of 16,000*l.* a year?" said the Ambassador, smiling good naturedly.

"I have done so to disencumber myself of the weight of an injustice."

"And this is the youth you would accuse of deception?" said Lady Kilgoff, haughtily.

"Forgive me, lady; forgive one who has suffered too heavily from the world not to fall into the error of thinking once unjustly of a benefactor."

"I have no title to the name, Sir," said Cashel. "Nay, more. I am your debtor for wealth which I squandered, believing it my own."

"I knew him better than any of you," cried old Doctor Tiernay, rushing forward and grasping Cashel by both hands. "My own generous, high-hearted boy. Come here, Mary; tell him candidly that you, too, were always of my opinion. This is no time for coyness. Let us have a little honesty after all this deception." He drew Cashel to one side, and, in a deep whisper, said, "What of that Spanish girl?—Are you married or not?"

Roland smiled at the eagerness of the old man's manner, and, in half-sadness, said, "Poor Maritaña is now a fugitive—we know not where."

A sudden commotion at the door, and a tumult of voices, interrupted the scene, and Rica rushed in, crying in ecstasy, "She is found—my child is found!"

The travellers of the diligence passing through the wood of Versailles had discovered the form of a sleeping girl at the foot of a tree, and carried her back with them to Paris. Enrique himself, being among them, recognised her at once, and soon succeeded in finding out Rica, into whose arms he restored her.

While Rica hurriedly poured forth this explanation, old Corrigan stood tremulous with agitation, and at last, advancing towards him, said, "Leicester, I am no longer afraid to meet you. Fortune has, at last, favoured me. I am rich now, and can make you rich also."

Rica started back: a sudden sickness came over him, and he fell powerless at the old man's feet.

What a scene of heartfelt emotion followed, as Mary recognised her long-lost father; and the careworn, sorrow-struck man saw the warm affections of those whom, in a lifelong, he had injured.

"The end of all this will be," said Lady Kilgoff, laughing through tears, "that I shall have to proceed on my journey alone. I foresee that we shall not share in all the general joy of these discoveries."

"I have a sister, too," exclaimed Mary, with enthusiasm, "whom I am burning with impatience to see. Where is she? when are we to meet?"

"She is below—she is in my carriage at the door," said Rica.

The Ambassador heard the words and left the room, returning in a moment with Maritaña on his arm. Wearied and exhausted as she was, there was that in her native grace and beauty that caused a thrill of admiration as she entered.

"Here is your sister, Maritaña," said Rica, leading her to where Mary stood, gazing with wistful eyes at the Spanish beauty. Maritaña looked steadily at the fair loveliness before her, where timidity and gentleness seemed impressed; and then, as if yielding to some sudden impulse, she sprang forward, and, clasping her hand, covered it with kisses, exclaiming with rapture—

"Non! non la sua hermana, ma la sua esclava!—Not her sister, but her slave."

Among the group who with admiring eyes gazed upon this little scene, there stood a dark, sombre-looking man, whose mean attire and travel-worn look could not conceal a certain dignity of air and manner. Cashel's quick glance soon discovered him, and in a moment they were locked in a fast embrace. "My old, true-hearted comrade!" cried Roland.

"Yes, Señora!" said Maritaña, as if answering the look of astonishment of Mary; "and for all that he seems now, he is a well-born caballero, and noble to boot."

"Everything looks worse and worse for my prospects of com-

panionship," said Lady Kilgoff, poutingly. "Mr. Corrigan—Mary —are you both bent on desertion?"

"We are bound for Ireland, fair lady; the little remnant of my life is a debt I owe my country."

"Señor Rica and your lovely daughter, will you be our companions?"

"Our road lies westward, lady. The New World must teach us to forget the Old one."

"Mr. Cashel, am I to guess whither your steps will lead you?"

"It would save me the pain of deciding if you did," said Roland, sadly.

"You come with us, Roland," said Mr. Corrigan; "you once told me that you felt Tubber-beg a home. Let us see if time has not erased the impression."

"And Maritaña, too," cried Mary.

"And Enrique!" said Maritaña.

"Then I must be of the party," said Dr. Tiernay. "I was never intended by nature for an embassy physician, but as a village doctor I still feel that I shall hold up my head with dignity."

Rica, who meanwhile was in earnest conversation with Cashel, now advanced into the middle of the group, and said,—"Mr. Cashel once contracted a solemn pledge to me, from which I feel no inclination to release him. I ask him before this assemblage if it be true he promised to marry my daughter?"

Roland grew deadly pale, but in a faint voice replied, "It is true."

"Are you willing to keep your pledge?" said Rica, firmly.

Cashel made no answer but a slight motion of the head.

"Then she is yours," said Rica, placing Mary Leicester's hand in his. While Maritaña, in a transport of feeling, fell into her father's arms, and sobbed aloud.

"Then we are all bound once for Ireland," cried Mr. Corrigan; "and I trust never to leave it more."

"I will not promise," said Cashel, as he drew Mary closer to him. "The memories I bear of the land are not all painless."

"But you have seen nothing of Ireland that was Irish!" exclaimed Tiernay, boldly. "You saw a mongrel society made up of English adventurers, who, barren of hope at home, came to dazzle with their fashionable vices the cordial homeliness of our humbler land. You saw the poor pageantry of a mock court, and the frivolous pretension of a tinsel rank. You saw the emptiness of pretended statesmanship, and the assumed superiority of a class whose ignorance was only veiled by their insolence. But of hearty, generous, hospitable Ireland—of the land of warm impulses and kindly affections—you saw nothing. That is a country yet to be explored by you; nor are

its mysteries the less likely to be unravelled, that an Irish wife will be your guide to them. And now to breakfast, for I am famishing."

Where the characters of a tale bear a share in influencing its catastrophe, the reader seems to have a prescriptive right to learn something of their ultimate destiny, even though the parts they played were merely subordinate. Many of ours here cannot lay claim to such an interest, and were seen but like the phantoms which a magic lantern throws upon the wall—moving and grouping for a moment, and then lost for ever.

It is from no want of respect to our reader, if we trace not the current of such lives; it is simply from the fact, that when they ceased to act, they ceased, as it were, to exist. Are we not, all of us in the world, acted upon and influenced by events and people—purely passers-by, known to-day, seen perhaps for a week, or known for a month, and yet never after met with in all life's journey? As on a voyage many a casual air of wind, many a wayward breeze helps us onward, and yet none inquire "whence it cometh or whither it goeth," —so is it in the real world; and why not in the world of fiction, which ought to be its counterpart?

Of those in whom our interest centred, the reader knows all that we know ourselves. Would he, or rather she, care to learn that the elder Miss Kennyfeck never married, but became a companion to Lady Janet, who, on the death of Sir Andrew, caused by his swallowing a liniment, and taking into his stomach what was meant for his skin, went abroad, and is still a well-known character in the watering-places of Germany, where she and her friend are the terror of all who tremble at evil-speaking and slandering?

Olivia married the Reverend Knox Softly, and seems as meek as a curate's wife ought to be, nor bears a trace of those days when she smiled on cornets or mingled sighs with captains of hussars. If some of our characters have fared ill in this adventurous history, others have been more fortunate. The Dean is made a Colonial Bishop, and the distinguished Mr. Howle's picture occupies a place in the last Exhibition!

Meek is still a placeman: bland, gentle, and conciliating as ever, he made at the close of the session a most affecting speech upon the sorrows of Ireland, and drew tears from the ventilator at his picture of her destitution!

Mrs. Kennyfeck and "Aunt Fanny" keep house together in the ancient city of Galway. Attracted to each other by a thousand antipathies, more cohesive than any friendship, they fight and quarrel unceasingly, and are never known to agree, save when the enthusiasm of their malevolence has discovered a common victim in the circle of their "friends."

Here ends our history; nor need we linger longer with those whose happiness, so far as worldly prosperity can make it, is at last secured.

There is but one destiny of which we have to speak. Linton was never brought to trial; the day after his landing in England he was found dead in the cell of his prison—no trace of violence, nor any evidence of poison to account for the circumstance; and whether through some agency of his own, or by the workings of a broken heart, the fact remains a mystery.

THE END.

C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

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